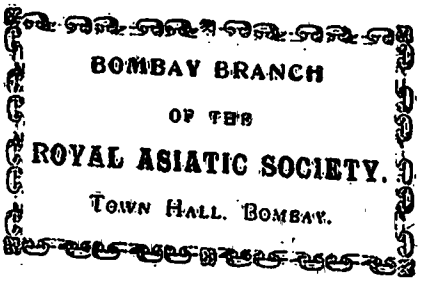
00035932



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016

THE

LIFE AND OPINIONS

OF

JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D.D.

Illustrated principally from his

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS;

XXII. 4. 2

WITH A

PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE PAPAL SYSTEM, AND OF THE STATE OF THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

35932

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

B. J. HOLDSWORTH,
18, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

HATCHARD AND SON,
PICCADILLY.

1828.

00035932

LONDON:

PRINTED BY S. HOLDSWORTH, 13, PATERNOSTER ROW.

CONTENTS.

THE LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

Origin and effects of the Papal Schism—Wycliffe's tract "On the Schism of the Popes," and other references to that event—His work on "The Truth and Meaning of Scripture"—His sickness at Oxford, and recovery—Importance attached by him to Preaching—His laborious attention to it—Reasons of his particular reverence for that exercise—History of Preaching—Character of Wycliffe's manuscript discourses—Extracts—illustrating his manner of exposing the errors and disorders of the ecclesiastical system—and of inculcating the sufficiency of Scripture, the right of private judgment, the doctrines peculiar to the Gospel, and the various obligations, and the means conducing, to religious devotedness 1

CHAPTER II.

History of attempts toward a translation of the Scriptures into the language of this country before the age of Wycliffe—By the Anglo-Saxon Clergy—By the Anglo-Norman—Wycliffe's purpose as embracing a translation of the whole volume, and its general circulation, strictly a novelty—This affirmed by Knighton—Some circumstances favorable to this enterprise—Extracts exhibiting the Reformer's manner of defending this effort—The insurrection of the Commons—A Narrative of its Causes and Character—Similar Convulsions in other States at the same period 37

CHAPTER III.

PAGE.

Transubstantiation—Opposed by Berengarius—and by the Vaudois and Albigenses—Not Recognized by the Anglo-Saxon Church—Defended by Lanfranc, and espoused by the Anglo-Norman Clergy—Wycliffe's opposition to it—Severe penalties denounced on all who should favor his opinions concerning it—His appeal to the civil power for protection—His feeling under these persecutions—Analysis of his "Wicket"—Proceedings of Courtney, and the Synod at the Grey Friars—Wycliffe favored by the University—State of parties in the nation unfriendly to the efforts of the Reformer's—Inquisitorial Statute obtained by the Clergy—Notice of Robert Rigge, Dr. Hereford, Reppington, Ashton, and others. 72

CHAPTER IV.

Persecution—Sketch of its History—Wycliffe's devotional allusion to the evils of his time—Summary of his Complaint addressed to the King and Parliament—Effect of that appeal—The Reformer is forsaken by Lancaster—His purposes unaltered by that event—His vigorous perception of the bearings of the controversy respecting the Eucharist, and his confidence of ultimate success—He appears before the Convocation at Oxford—Substance of his Confession—Perplexity of his Judges—He retires to Lutterworth—His Letter to the Pontiff..... 111

CHAPTER V.

State of the Reformed Doctrine on the Continent during the age of Wycliffe—Causes of the protection frequently afforded to its disciples by the secular nobility—Probable motives of the Duke of Lancaster in patronizing Wycliffe—The Reformer is favored by the Duke of Gloucester, and the Queen Mother—Anne of Bohemia—Sketch of the Religious History of Bohemia—Farther notice of Wycliffe's more distinguished partisans—Geoffry Chaucer—Influence of Poetry on the Reformation of the Church—Notice of St. Amour—Of the Roman de la Rose—And of Robert Longland 144

CHAPTER VI.

Number of Wycliffe's disciples—The Lollards consisted of two classes—Notice of John of Northampton—Prospects of the Reformers under Richard the Second—Testimony of Knighton respecting the number and the character of Wycliffe's followers—Analysis of the Plowman's Tale—Theological opinions of the disciples of Wycliffe—Character of his "Poor Priests"—Analysis of the tract "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices"—Notice of William Thorp 183

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE.

Notice of Wycliffe's Writings subsequent to his exclusion from Oxford—His Trialogus—On Obedience to Prelates—On the Deceits of Satan and of his Priests—On the Duty of Lords—Of Servants and Lords—Of Good Preaching Priests—On the Four Deceits of Antichrist—On the Prayers of Good Men—Of Clerks Possessioners—Rise of the Crusade against the Avignon Pope, and its Failure—Wycliffe renews his Contest with the Mendicants—His Treatise on the Sentence of the Curse Expounded—On Prelates and other Subjects—His Sentiments on War—Extracts from his Sermons—His Sickness and Death..... 207

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OPINIONS OF WYCLIFFE.

Design of the Chapter—The doctrine of Wycliffe respecting the Pope's Temporal Power—The secular exemptions of the Clergy—The general authority of the Magistrate—The limits of that authority—The obligations of the Magistrate with respect to the Church—The customs of patronage—Tithes and Ecclesiastical Endowments—The principles of the Reformer's theory derived in part from the existing system—His reverence for the Priestly Office—His judgment of the Contemporary Priesthood—A summary of his doctrine relating to the civil establishment of Christianity and Clerical Revenue—His opinions relating to Simony—The spiritual power of the Pope—The Hierarchy—The Religious Orders—The nature of a Christian Church—The Power of the Keys—Purgatory and Masses for the Dead—The Invocation of Saints—The Worship of Images—Confession—The Doctrine of Indulgences—The Celibacy of the Clergy—The Sacraments—Transubstantiation—Public Worship—Sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the Right of Private Judgment—A Summary of his Theological Doctrine 261

CHAPTER IX.

Observations on the Character of Wycliffe, and on the Connection of his Doctrine with the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.

Wycliffe's claim to originalty—His learning and intellectual character—His patriotism and love of mankind—His piety—Luther and Wycliffe compared—The bones of Wycliffe burnt—State of the Reformed Doctrine in England, from the decease of Wycliffe to the age of Luther—Accession of the House of Lancaster—Character of the Persecutions sanctioned by Henry the Fourth—The Doctrine of Wycliffe survives them—The Martyrdom of Lord Cobham—Conclusion..... 363

CHAPTER X.

On the Writings of John Wycliffe, D. D. 414

SECTION I.

His printed Works. 415

SECTION II.

Including the Wycliffe Manuscripts extant in England and Ireland. This series contains nearly forty MSS. preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, the existence of which has been hitherto unknown to the Reformer's Biographers 420

SECTION III.

His Pieces in the Imperial Library of Vienna..... 426

SECTION IV.

Titles of his Pieces known only by their names 429

SECTION V.

Works which have been improperly attributed to Wycliffe 430

APPENDIX 433

INDEX 457

THE

LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND EFFECTS OF THE PAPAL SCHISM——WYCLIFFE'S TRACT "ON THE SCHISM OF THE POPES," AND OTHER REFERENCES TO THAT EVENT——HIS WORK ON THE TRUTH AND MEANING OF SCRIPTURE——HIS SICKNESS AT OXFORD, AND RECOVERY——IMPORTANCE ATTACHED BY HIM TO PREACHING——HIS LABORIOUS ATTENTION TO IT——REASONS OF HIS PARTICULAR REVERENCE FOR THAT EXERCISE——HISTORY OF PREACHING——CHARACTER OF WYCLIFFE'S MANUSCRIPT DISCOURSES——EXTRACTS——ILLUSTRATING HIS MANNER OF EXPOSING THE ERRORS AND DISORDERS OF THE ECCLECIASTICAL SYSTEM——AND OF INCULCATING THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE, THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, THE DOCTRINES PECULIAR TO THE GOSPEL, AND THE VARIOUS OBLIGATIONS, AND THE MEANS CONDUCING, TO RELIGIOUS DEVOTEDNESS.

CHAP. I.

Origin and effects of the papal schism.

THE residence of the pontiffs during seventy years at Avignon, was described by the Italians as a second babylonish captivity. That captivity, if such it may be called, had indeed a tendency to reduce the extravagance of the papal claims; but it was far from being the most serious feature of that disgrace, which accompanied the representatives of St. Peter, on returning to the ancient seat of their authority. On the death of Gregory the eleventh in 1378, the cardinals assembled to elect his successor; but the Roman populace, aware that three-fourths of the conclave

CHAP. I.

were Frenchmen, and indignant that the vacant honor had been so frequently conferred on ecclesiastics of that nation, gathered tumultuously around the place of meeting, and uttered the most alarming menaces with a view to secure the suffrage of the electors in favor of an Italian. The cardinals trembled for their safety, and immediately pronounced Bartholomew de Pregnano, a Neapolitan, and then archbishop of Bari, as the object of their choice. The new pontiff assumed the name of Urban the sixth, but his conduct was such, as soon to exasperate his enemies and to alienate his friends. From this cause, or from national partialities, some of the leading cardinals retired from Rome to Anagni, and at Fondi, a city of Naples, they chose their brother of Geneva, to be the successor of Gregory, and he was immediately proclaimed as Clement the seventh. To justify this bold measure, it was pleaded that the election of Urban was the result of intimidation, and accordingly invalid. France, and her allies, including Spain, Sicily, and Cyprus, acknowledged the authority of Clement; while England, and the rest of Europe, adhered to that of Urban.[1] "And which of these two," observes Mosheim, "is to be considered as the true and "lawful pope, is to this day, matter of doubt, nor "will the records and writings alleged by the "contending parties enable us to adjust that point "with any certainty."[2]

But whatever were the merits of this controversy, its effects were by no means doubtful.

[1] Mosheim, iii. 326, 327. [2] Ibid.

Through the next half century, the church had two or three different heads at the same time; each of the contending popes forming plots, and thundering out anathemas against their competitors. "The distress and calamity of these times "is" said to have been "beyond all power of de- "scription, for not to insist on the perpetual con- "tentions and wars between the factions of the "several popes by which multitudes lost their "fortunes and lives, all sense of religion was ex- "tinguished in most places, and profligacy arose to "a most scandalous excess. The clergy while "they vehemently contended which of the reigning "popes was the true successor of Christ, were so "excessively corrupt as to be no longer studious "to keep up even the appearance of religion or "decency, and in consequence of all this, many "plain, well-meaning people, who concluded that "no one could possibly partake of eternal life "unless united with the vicar of Christ, were "overwhelmed with doubt, and were plunged into "the deepest distress of mind."[3] And thus also it was, that multitudes were prepared to doubt whether the supremacy claimed by the pontiffs, since it could become involved in such fearful uncertainty, could really be an article of faith or discipline so momentous as had been commonly supposed. Wycliffe, whose escape from the vengeance of the clergy, must be attributed in a great degree to the distractions occasioned by this event, was fully aware of the aid which it might be made to confer on his efforts as a reformer.

[3] Ibid, iii. 328.

CHAP. I.

Wycliffe's tract, "On the Schism of the Popes."

The controversy had no sooner commenced, than he published a tract intitled,—"On the "Schism of the Popes,"[4] in which he adverts to this dispute, as having divided the chief authorities of the hierarchy, and as constituting a feature of the times, which presented the most powerful inducement to attempt the destruction of those laws and customs, which had served so greatly to vitiate the christian priesthood, and to afflict the whole christian community. The endowments of the church, whether claimed by the pontiffs, or by the national clergy, he names as a principal cause of the degeneracy of both; and affirms that all estates entrusted to the stewardship of churchmen are capable of a more just, and of a far less dangerous application. To effect this new appropriation of the wealth which it is said had been frequently ill acquired, and was as frequently worse applied, the appeal made is not to the passions of the multitude, but to the solemn responsibilities of the sovereigns, and the rulers of Christendom. And that this exhortation might not be in vain, he renews his assault on the ground work of that policy which had long derived such potency from the genius of superstition,—questioning entirely the power of binding and loosing as assumed by the pope and his clergy. Instead of conceding that their authority over the disembodied spirit must ever regulate its destiny, he contends, that when correctly exercised, it is strictly ministerial only; and that inasmuch as its decisions were frequently opposed to moral

[4] MS. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. 3, No. 12, p. 193—208.

propriety, and to the known will of God, they were frequently to be viewed as the mere assumptions of human weakness or passion, from which no evil could with reason be apprehended. His advice, therefore is, "trust we in the help of Christ on "this point, for he hath begun already to help us "graciously in that he hath clove the head of anti-"christ, and made the two parts fight against "each other. For it is not doubtful that the sin "of the popes which has been so long continued "hath brought in this division." Should the rival pontiffs continue to lance their anathemas against each other, or should one prevail, a serious wound is in either case inflicted, and hence it is concluded that "emperors and kings should help in this "cause, to maintain God's law, to recover the he-"ritage of the church, and to destroy the foul sins "of clerks, saving their persons. Thus should "peace be established, and simony destroyed." Noticing the clamorous advocates of the papal infallibility, he remarks that no such attribute may be conferred by the suffrage of cardinals or of princes, and observes that here especially "the "children of the fiend should learn their logic "and their philosophy well, lest they prove here-"tical by a false understanding of the law of "Christ." Except when the person elected to an ecclesiastical office, previously possess the virtues which bespeak him a servant of Christ, the most vaunted forms of investment with such dignity, are declared to be vain. Among heresies, he affirms that "there is no greater than for a man "to believe that he is absolved from his sin, if he "give money, or because a priest layeth his hand

CHAP. I.

"on the head, and saith I absolve thee. For "thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, or else God "absolveth thee not." In the same treatise, the necessity of confession to a priest is denied, no less distinctly than the received doctrine on the power of the keys; and having thus wrested from the hands of churchmen, those weapons which had been wielded with so much success against human liberty, he calls upon the secular authorities to attempt the long-needed reformation of the ecclesiastical body, both in its head and its members.

Other references to that event.

Nor was it in this vigorous production only that such modes of reasoning were pursued, and pursued with a view to the same result. In his writings from this period to his death, the lust of dominion, the avarice, and the cruelty, discovered by these rival pontiffs in prosecuting their different claims, are the matters placed in bold and ceaseless contrast with the maxims and the spirit of the Saviour and of his apostles. "Simon Magus," he observes, "never laboured more in the work of "simony, than do these priests. And so God "would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only "one such priest, but for the sin which they had "done, made division among two, so that men in "Christ's name may the more easily overcome "them both." Evil, it is remarked, is weakened by diffusion, no less than good, "and this now "moveth poor priests to speak heartily in this "matter, for when God will bless his church, but "men are slothful, and will not labour, their sloth "is to be rebuked for many reasons."[5] In his pa-

[5] MS. Of the Church and her Governance. Bib. Reg. 18, B. ix.

rochial discourses delivered to his flock at Lutterworth, the schism of the papacy is frequently thus adverted to.[6] To restore men to the more enlightened service of their Maker, by rendering the fear of God, and not the fear of their fellows, the ruling temper of the mind, is the devout purpose to which the event is ever applied.

Notice of his work "On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture."

It was at this period that the reformer completed a work, "On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture," the most extended, if not the most systematically arranged, of all his productions. A copy of this treatise was in the possession of our venerable martyrologist, and appears to have been considered the only one extant. That at present in the Bodleian library was formerly the property of Dr. Allen, a great admirer of Wycliffe, and a diligent collector of his manuscripts. It is without a title page, and a few leaves from the commencement are lost: the remaining portion of the volume, extending to more than six hundred pages is in good preservation. Beside this copy, the only one hitherto mentioned in the printed catalogues of the reformer's writings, there is another in the library at Trinity College, Dublin. This is complete, and in an excellent state. The work itself has required this particular notice, not only from its extent, but from its character as embodying almost

[6] Thus in one of his homilies (on Rom. c. xiii.) it is affirmed of the pontiff, "that he is not on Christ's side who put his soul for his sheep, "but on the side of antichrist who putteth many souls for his pride. "This man feedeth not the sheep of Christ, as Christ thrice commanded "Peter; but spoileth them, and slayeth them, and leadeth them many "wrong ways." The same contrast is pursued in the homily on John, Ep. i. c. ii. and much more at length in the treatise "On the Seven "Deadly Sins."—MS. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. I.

every sentiment peculiar to the mind of our reformer. The supreme authority of holy writ: the unalienable right of private judgment: all the branches of clerical power: the sacraments of the church; together with almost every article of moral obligation, may be found largely discussed in this volume.[7] The author of the Acts and Monuments intended giving it to the world; and we may regret that his purpose was not accomplished. Were this the only work preserved from the pen of Wycliffe, it would alone be sufficient to merit for its author, the first place among the intrepid advocates of truth and piety in the annals of this country.

His sickness at Oxford.

But the labour of producing such compositions, and the excitements inseparable from the restless hostilities of his enemies, so shook his frame at this period, as to threaten his speedy dissolution,—and in truth to lay the foundation of the malady which a few years later was the occasion of his death. Such also was the force of religious prejudice in the fourteenth century, that his old antagonists, the mendicants, conceived it next to impossible that an heresiarch so notorious should find himself near a future world, without the most serious apprehensions of approaching vengeance. But while thus conscious of their own rectitude, and certain that the dogmas of the reformer had arisen from the suggestions of the great enemy, some advantages to their cause were anticipated, could the dying culprit be induced to make any recantation of his

[7] MS. Bibl. Bodl. Rotulæ in Archi. A. 3021. 32. MS. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. I. No. 24. *De sensu et vertitate Scripturæ* is the title given to the work by Fox, I. 583.

published opinions. Wycliffe was in Oxford when this sickness arrested his activity, and confined him to his chamber. From the four orders of friars, four doctors, who were also called regents, were gravely deputed to wait on their expiring enemy; and to these the same number of civil officers, called senators of the city, and aldermen of the wards, were added. When this embassy entered the apartment of the rector of Lutterworth, he was seen stretched on his bed. Some kind wishes were first expressed as to his better health, and the blessing of a speedy recovery. It was presently suggested, that he must be aware of the many wrongs which the whole mendicant brotherhood had sustained from his attacks, especially in his sermons, and in certain of his writings; and as death was now apparently about to remove him, it was sincerely hoped that he would not conceal his penitence, but distinctly revoke whatever he had preferred against them to their injury. The sick man remained silent and motionless until this address was concluded. He then beckoned his servants to raise him in his bed; and fixing his eyes on the persons assembled, summoned all his remaining strength, as he exclaimed aloud, "I "shall not die but live, and shall again declare the "evil deeds of the friars." The doctors and their attendants now hurried from his presence, and they lived to feel the truth of his prediction; nor will it be easy to imagine another scene, more characteristic of the parties composing it, or of the times with which it is connected.

CHAP. I.

[8] Lewis, c. iv. 82. Bale, 469.

CHAP. I.

His sentiments with respect to preaching.

While the writings of Wycliffe, were thus performing their part on the mind of the community; it was not merely his divinity lectures, but the whole of his pulpit instructions, which were studiously directed to the same object. It is known that in the fourteenth century, the exercises of public worship consisted of little beside that species of mechanical occupation which an apostle describes as "bodily exercise," and as "profiting little." These, however, and that domestic ministration of the sacraments to which the most feeble or depraved among the clergy were deemed fully competent, were considered as securing to the worshipper whatever it was the design of christianity to bestow. As the consequence of questioning this theory, and at length of wholly denying the efficacy of such services, except as accompanied by appropriate perception and feeling on the part of the persons engaged in them, was the importance which became connected in the judgment of our reformer with the office of preaching. No language can be more forcible, than that in which the sacred writers speak of the preaching of the cross, as the divinely appointed means of bringing the nations to the obedience of the gospel; and in proportion as men have imbibed the spirit of primitive piety in any subsequent age, has been the prominence assigned to this department of ministerial duty. Among the means which had induced our Saxon ancestors to renounce their ancient idolatry, preaching held a conspicuous place;[9] but from that period to the age of Wycliffe,

[9] This was the service to which Aidan, the apostle of Northumbria devoted his life. (Bede, c. v.) In his first attempt to address the pagan

it fell into comparative disuse in the practices of the english clergy. Grossteste deplored this fact, and with a view to supply the deficiency, became a zealous patron of the preaching friars. He lived, however, to regret that remedy as being worse than the disease.[10] Yet so powerful were the effects of preaching, even in the hands of the mendicants, that had not their rapid success produced so speedy a corruption of their institute, the parochial clergy, by limiting their official services to the prescribed repetitions from the mass book, must have lost the whole of their influence over the mind of the people.[11] Wycliffe saw this state of things, but while he spared not the vices or the indolence of the secular clergy, as leading to the prevalent neglect of this exercise, his boldest censures were reserved for the fraternities, in whose labours he could discern nothing but the abuses of the function which they had assumed as their peculiar province. The itinerant character of their ministry could hardly have displeased him, as he often defended the same practice in his followers. It was their substituting "fables—chronicles of the world—and stories from the battle of Troy"—in the place of the gospel; and the religious delusions imposed by them on the rich and the poor, to raise themselves into distinction, and to gratify their avarice and sensuality, which filled him with so restless an abhorrence of "these new orders." Instead, however, of imbibing a disgust of preach-

Saxons, Oswald, the sovereign, acted as interpreter. By the Scottish missionaries in general, the same importance was conferred on this function.

[10] Paris, 873.

[11] See Prelim. View, c. iii. sect. 1.

CHAP. I.

ing from seeing it thus subservient to vice and deception, the reformer appears to have judged but the more favorably of its power as the means of reformation, reasoning from its effects while relating to fictions and trifles, to its probable result when consecrated to the promulgation of the truths of gospel. Possessed himself, of such learning as had aided the mendicants in acquiring their reputation, he was also a proficient in that power of oral communication which was their special faculty. In Wycliffe the severity of the cloister was associated with the learning of the college, and with that capacity also of interesting the understanding and affections of ordinary minds, which is rarely found in such combinations. In secret, he mourned over the degraded state of his country, and over that immense expenditure of wealth in favour of the clergy, which served but to perpetuate their secular character, and to strengthen every cord of the national thraldom; and to contribute something toward the religious emancipation of his native land, was the object to which the acquirements and the energies of his generous nature were readily devoted.

His laborious attention to the office of preaching.

We know not the number of sermons composed by Wycliffe, but that copies of nearly three hundred should have escaped the fury which was so long exerted to affect the destruction of whatever his pen had produced, is sufficient to assure us that his labours as a preacher were abundant.[12] His zeal

[12] The copy which I have principally consulted, is that of the British Museum – Bib. Reg. 18. B. ix. Several copies, more or less perfect, and written in some instances before the close of the fourteenth century, and in others later, are still extant in the Museum, and in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin.

was not of that spurious kind which assails the vast only, or expatiates on the great and the future, at the cost of every nearer and more humble department of duty. Accordingly, to appreciate the character of the english reformer, it is necessary to view him, not only as advocating the claims of his sovereign before the delegates of the pontiff; as solving the questions which perplexed the english parliament; or as challenging the most intellectual of the age to discussion on the truth of his acknowledged doctrine; but as employed in the diligent performance of those less imposing duties which devolve on the parish priest. It was no novelty to see the venerable Wycliffe in a village pulpit, surrounded by his rustic auditory; or in the lowest hovel of the poor, fulfilling his office at the bedside of the sick and the dying, whether freeman or slave. Over a sphere thus extended, his genius and benevolence were equally diffused. Previous to this period, he had required his disciples to unite with the devotions of the sabbath, a regular attention to the wants of the afflicted and the poor. The public exercises of that day being devoutly performed, the christian man is enjoined "to visit those who "are sick, or who are in trouble, especially those "whom God hath made needy by age, or by other "sickness, as the feeble, the blind, and the lame "who are in poverty. These thou shalt relieve "with thy goods after thy power, and after their "need, for thus biddeth the gospel.[13]" It is but just to suppose that the preacher, who, under such circumstances, was forward to inculcate these and

[13] MS. Exposition of the Decalogue, Cotton. Titus. D. xix. 122.

CHAP. I.

similar offices of domestic charity, was himself accustomed to conform to them. But his favorite doctrine which defined true charity as "beginning "at the love of man's spirit," was so far extended as to induce him to believe that "men who love "not the souls, love little the bodies of their "neighbours," and hence the work of christian instruction is described as "the best service that "man may do for his brother."[14] Priests who are found "in taverns, and hunting and playing at "their tables," instead of "learning God's law, "and preaching," are accordingly denounced as "foulest traitors," since among the duties of their office, "most of all is the preaching of the gospel; "for this Christ enjoined on his disciples more "than any other; by this he conquered the world, "out of the fiend's hand; and whosoever he be "that can but bring priests to act thus, hath "authority from God, and merit in his deed."[15]

Wycliffe's reasonings in favour of preaching

As the impression made by Wycliffe and his followers on the mind of his contemporaries, may be attributed, in a great degree, to their peculiar sentiments, on the relative importance of preaching, it will not perhaps be uninteresting to the reader, to notice the statements and reasonings of the reformer, on this point, more at length. "1. The highest service that men may attain to "on earth," is said to be, to "preach the word of "God. This service falls peculiarly to priests, "and therefore God more straightly demands it of "them. Hereby, should they produce children to "God, and that is the end for which God has

[14] Homily on Philippians, c. iii. [15] Epistola ad Simplices Sacerdotes.

"wedded the church. Lovely it might be, to have "a son that were lord of this world, but fairer "much it were to have a son in God, who, as a "member of holy church, shall ascend to heaven! "And for this cause, Jesus Christ left other works "and occupied himself mostly in preaching, and "thus did his apostles, and for this, God loved "them. II. Also, he does best, who best keeps "the commandments of God. Now the first "commandment of the second table, bids us ho- "nor our elders, as our father and mother. But "this honor should be first given to holy church, "for she is the mother we should most love, and "for her, as our faith teaches, Christ died. The "church, however, is honored most by the "preaching of God's word, and hence this is the "best service that priests may render unto God. "Thus a woman said to Christ, that the womb "which bare him, and the breasts which he had "sucked, should be blessed of God; but Christ "said, rather should that man be blessed, who "should hear the words of God, and keep them. "And this should preachers do, more than other "men, and this word should they keep more than "any other treasure. Idleness in this office is "to the church its greatest injury, producing "most the children of the fiend, and sending "them to his court. III. Also, that service is the "best, which has the worst opposed to it. But "the opposite of preaching, is of all things the "worst; and therefore preaching, if it be well "done, is the best of all. And accordingly, "Jesus Christ, when he ascended into heaven, "commanded it especially to all his apostles, to

CHAP. I.

"preach the gospel freely to every man. So also, "when Christ spoke last with Peter, he bade him "thrice, as he loved him, to feed his sheep; and "this would not a wise shepherd have done, had "he not himself loved it well. In this stands the "office of the spiritual shepherd. As the bishop "of the temple hindered Christ, so is he hindered "by the hindering of this deed. Therefore Christ "told them, that at the day of doom, Sodom and "Gomorrah should better fare than they. And "thus, if our bishops preach not in their own "persons, and hinder true priests from preaching, "they are in the sin of the bishops who killed the "Lord Jesus Christ."[16]

So far then was the reformer from confiding in the sacraments of the church, as certainly connected, with a participation in the mercies of redemption. Man he considers, as a being endowed with reason and with passions, and he would attempt the discipline of the latter, but by bringing the light of divine truth to bear upon the former. This, according to the language of the church of Rome, was to ensnare the unwary by an artful appeal to the vanity and self-confidence of the human mind. But if there be truth in religion or nature, intellectual culture is the only medium through which the moral improvement of man should be contemplated. The properties of his nature, and the known will of the Deity, announce him as a being who must give an account of himself unto his Judge, when this probationary scene has closed; and the theory which serves at all to efface the sentiment of res-

[16] MS. Contra Fratres Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83. p. 19, 20.

sponsibility from his mind, must be of murderous tendency. There is another motive, however, from which this species of objection has sometimes arisen. To have imitated the zeal of Wycliffe, as a preacher, would have required a different faculty from what was necessary to go through the usual routine of parish duty. The class of men who were satisfied with their ability for such performances, and still more the inmates of convents, would affect to be astonished at the weakness or the novelty of his opinions, respecting a function which the care of the church had rendered almost superfluous; which had ever been but too much allied to ostentation, and pregnant with every conceivable danger to the peace and unity of the christian commonwealth. It is thus he reasons with such objectors. "When true "men teach, that by the law of God, and wit, and "reason, each priest is bound to do his utmost to "preach the gospel of Christ, the fiend beguileth "hypocrites to excuse him from this service by "teaching a feigned contemplative life;—and ur- "ging that since that is the best, and they may "not do both, they are needed from their love of "God, to leave the preaching of the gospel to live "in contemplation. But see now the hypocrisy "and falsehood of this. Our faith teaches us, "that since Christ was God, and might not err, "he taught, and did the best life for priests; yet "Christ preached the gospel, and charged all his "apostles and disciples to go and preach the gos- "pel to all men. The best life then for priests "in this world, is to teach and preach the gospel. "God also teacheth in the old law, that the office

CHAP. I.

"of a priest is to shew to the people their sins. "But as each priest is a prophet by his order, ac- "cording to St. Gregory on the gospels, it is then "the office of each to preach and to proclaim the "sins of the people, and in this manner shall "each priest be an angel of God, as holy writ "affirms. Also Christ, and John the Baptist, "left the desart, and preached the gospel to their "death. To do this, therefore, is the greatest cha- "rity, or else they were out of charity, or at least "imperfect in it; and that may hardly be, since "the one was God; and since no man, after "Christ, has been holier than the baptist."

"Also, the holy prophet, Jeremiah, hallowed in "his mother's womb, might not be excused from "preaching by his love of contemplation, but was "charged of God to proclaim the sins of the people, "and to suffer hard pain for doing so, and so were "all the prophets of God. Ah! Lord, since Christ "and John, and all the prophets, were compelled "by charity to come out of the desart to preach "to the people, and to leave their solitary "prayers, how dare these pretending heretics "say it is better to be still, and to pray over "their own feigned ordinances than to preach "the gospel of Christ. Lord! What cursed spirit "of falsehood moveth priests to close themselves "within stone walls for all their life, since Christ "commanded all his apostles and priests to go "into all the world, and to preach the gospel! "Certainly they are open fools, and do plainly "against the gospel; and if they continue in "this error, are accursed of God, as perilous de- "ceivers and heretics. For in the best part of

"the pope's law, it is said, that each man who "cometh to the priesthood, taketh on him the "office of a beadle or a crier, to go before dooms-"day, and to cry to the people their sins, and the "vengeance of God; and since men are holden "heretics who do against the pope's law, are not "those priests heretics, who refuse to preach the "gospel of Christ, and compel other true men to "leave the preaching of it. All laws opposed to "these, are opposed to God's law, and reason and "charity, and for the maintenance of pride and "covetousness in antichrist's worldly clerks."[17]

To those who allege from the gospel, that Magdalene chose the better part, in preferring a contemplative, to an active life; it is replied, that the quotation might have some pertinence, if priests were women, and if no mandate opposed to the maxims of seclusion had been given to them. The result indeed of the reasonings commonly adopted on this subject is said to be "that Christ, "when in this world, chose the life least suited "to it, and that he has obliged all his priests "to forsake the better, and take the worse. It "is thus these deceivers put error on Jesus "Christ. *** Prayer," it is cautiously affirmed, "is good, but not so good as preaching; and ac-"cordingly in preaching, and also in praying, "in the giving of sacraments, the learning of "the law of God, and the rendering of a good "example by purity of life, in these should stand "the life of a priest."[18] Such were the opi-

[17] MS. Of a feigned contemplative life, &c. Trinity College, Dublin. Class. C. Tab. 3. No. 12.

[18] MS. Contra Fratres Bibl. Bodl. Arch. A. 83.

CHAP. I.

nions of Wycliffe with respect to preaching, as compared with the other duties of the christian minister, and from his adherence to these, arose much of his efficiency as a reformer. Opinions so true, so practical, and so plainly stated, could not have been reiterated in vain; and we find them creating the class of men, called by the rector of Lutterworth, "poor priests;"—persons, whose itinerant labours we shall presently see, were every where directed to aid the piety of their countrymen; and at the same time, to overthrow that host of superstitions before which the laity had so long bowed down, and which the clergy in general were so concerned to perpetuate.

History of preaching.

While such was the place assigned by the reformer to the office of preaching, it may be proper to remark, that to the commencement of the thirteenth century, two methods of performing this service had prevailed. These were technically called "declaring" and "postillating." According to the former, the preacher commenced, by announcing the subject on which he meant to discourse, and proceeded to deliver, what in modern language would be considered an oration, or an essay, rather than a sermon. To postillate, was to commence with reading a portion of scripture, and then taking its parts, in the order of the writer, to offer such remarks upon them as were fitted to explain their meaning, and secure their application. To the latter method, which is the same with what is still called lecturing or exposition, another was added about this period, and one by which the ancient practice of declaring was ere

long nearly abolished, and the far better custom of postillating was rendered much less frequent. The sacred text had been recently divided into its present order of chapter and verse; and the logic to which the schoolmen were so devoted, suggested the selecting of some brief portion of scripture as the basis of a sermon, and that the matters introduced to illustrate the doctrine or duty to be discussed, should be divided and subdivided, in the manner still so generally adopted by preachers.[19] The sacred writings, were too highly valued by Wycliffe, to be dispensed with as the obvious foundation of the instructions delivered by him from the pulpit. This motive also, which led him to avoid the practice of declaring, appears to have rendered him doubtful concerning the utility of the new scholastic mode of teaching, and to have determined his general preference of the expository method.

His compositions for the pulpit, therefore, which have descended to us, are nearly all of the class described as postils. They are also the produc-

Character of his sermons.

[19] Wood I. 58, 59. Knighton, col. 2430. The former writer has introduced friar Bacon as bitterly lamenting the prevalence of the scholastic methods of preaching, and as accounting for its adoption in a way not very honorable to the contemporary clergy. "The greatest part of "our prelates," he observes, "having but little knowledge in divinity, "and having been little used to preaching in their youth; when they "become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under a "necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons of certain novices, who "have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quib-"blings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wis-"dom, but much childish trifling and folly, unsuitable to the dignity of the "pulpit. May God," he exclaims, "banish this conceited and artificial "way of preaching, out of his church, for it will never do any good, nor "elevate the hearts of the hearers, to any thing that is good or excellent." Henry's Hist. viii. 182—185.

CHAP. I.

tion of different periods, through the interval from 1376, when the writer became rector of Lutterworth, to the close of 1384. In some instances, they consist of little more than a few brief notes, appended to a vernacular translation of the lesson for the day, in others they approach nearer to the length of a modern sermon. But when filling several closely written folio pages, we know not how far to regard them as exhibiting any thing beyond the spirit or the manner of the reformer's efforts as a preacher. That he wholly restricted himself, in any case, to what he had written, is improbable, from his known facility of extemporaneous communication, and from the fact that these preparations for the pulpit, sometimes resemble the mere specifications of topics, rather than any regular discussion of them. Nor is it certain, indeed, that their publication was the act of the reformer, or at all anticipated by him. They contain nothing opposed to the supposition of their having been collected and published after his decease; and the character of Purvey, his curate at that period, renders it certain that no small effort would be made to preserve every such document. But through whatever medium the copies of these discourses have been transmitted, we may safely conclude that what they contain, was delivered to the people of Lutterworth, by their rector; and there is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wycliffe, the nature or the progress of which might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains. It should also be stated, that these compositions are strictly of a popular character. References to abstruse or speculative questions

frequently arise, either from the import of the text, or from the reasonings suggested by it; but these are invariably dismissed, that "things more pro- "fiting" might become the matter of attention. Through the whole, the multiplied corruptions of the hierarchy are vigorously assailed, as forming the great barrier to all religious improvement. The social obligations of men are also frequently discussed, and traced with a cautious firmness to the authority of the scriptures; while the doctrines of the gospel are uniformly exhibited, as declaring the guilt, and the spiritual infirmities of men, to be such as to render the atonement of Christ their only way of pardon, and the grace of the divine Spirit their only hope of purity. A few extracts will farther assist the reader in judging of the manner in which the reformer discharged the duties of the humble, but important office of village preacher.

His mode of treating the questions of reform from the pulpit.

It is thus he addressed his parishioners on the obligation of priests to extend their services as preachers to the village and the hamlet, and to the most scattered portions of the community. "The gospel telleth us the duty which falls to all "the disciples of Christ, and also telleth us how "priests, both high and low, should occupy them- "selves in the church of God, and in serving him. "And first, Jesus himself did indeed the lessons "which he taught. The gospel relates how Jesus "went about in the places of the country, both "great and small, as in cities and castles, or "small towns, and this to teach us to profit ge- "nerally unto men, and not to forbear to preach "to a people, because they are few, and our name

CHAP. I.

"may not, in consequence, be great. For we "should labour for God, and from him hope for "our reward. There is no doubt, that Christ "went into small uplandish towns, as to Beth-"page, and Cana in Galilee; for Christ went to "all those places where he wished to do good. "And he laboured not thus for gain, for he was not "smitten either with pride or with covetousness."[20] In a subsequent discourse, he remarks, that "it "was ever the manner of Jesus to speak the "words of God, wherever he knew that they "would be profitable to others who heard them; "and hence Christ often preached, now at meat, "and now at supper, and indeed at whatever time "it was convenient for others to hear him."[21] It is accordingly regretted, that the "craft of the "fiend" had given that form to the jurisdiction of the prelates, which greatly prevented good men in their attempts to imitate those retired efforts in the cause of humanity and religion, which appear so lovely in the history of the Saviour. While hebrew priests admitted the master to their synagogues, the successors of the apostles are said to exclude his servants from their churches.[22]

In an exposition of the epistle, read on the third sunday after advent, he thus proceeds;— "Let a man so guess of us, as of the ministers of "God, and as dispensers of his services. And if "each man should be found true in this matter, "priests, both high and low, should be found "more true. But most foul is the failure, and "the sin of priests in this respect. As if ashamed

---

[20] Homilies, Bib. Reg 18. B. ix. 134. [21] Ibid. p. 169. [22] Ibid. 134.

"to appear as the servants of Christ, the pope "and his bishops show the life of emperors, and "of the lordly in the world, and not the living of "Christ. But since Christ hated such things; "they give us no room to guess them to be the "ministers of Christ. And so they fail in the "first lesson, which Paul teacheth in this scrip- "ture. Lord! what good doeth the idle talk of "the pope, who must be called of men most blessed "father, and bishops most reverend men, while "their life is discordant from that of Christ? In "so taking of these names, they shew that they "are on the fiend's side, and children of the father "of falsehood. After St. Gregory, the pope may "say, that he is the servant of the servants of "God, but his life reverseth his name; for he "faileth to follow Christ, and is not the dispenser "of the services which God hath bidden, but de- "parteth from this service to that lordship which "emperors have bestowed. And thus, all the "services of the church which Christ hath ap- "pointed to his priests, are turned aside, so that "if men will take heed to that service which "Christ hath thus limited, it is all turned upside "down, and hypocrites are become rulers."[23] It was thus shewn, that the claims of the greater portion of the clergy, to the veneration or the confidence of the people, were without foundation. To do this, however, would have been to confer but a partial benefit, unless some protection could be afforded from the usual consequences of clerical displeasure. To this point, the remaining por-

[23] Ibid.

CHAP. I.

tion of the sermon distinctly relates. The apostle is noticed as affirming, "that in his case it was a "small thing to be judged of man's judgment;" and from this it is observed, "that men should "not suppose themselves injured by the blind "judgment of men, since God will judge all "things whether to good or evil. Paul therefore "taketh little heed to the judgment that man "judgeth, for he knew well from the scriptures, "that if God judgeth thus, then man's judgment "must stand, and not else. Thus there are two "days of judgment, the day of the Lord, and "man's day. The day of the Lord is the day of "doom, when he shall judge all manner of men; "the day of man is now present, when man judg- "eth, and by the law of man. Now every present "judgment must be reversed, if it ought reverseth "reason. But at the day of doom, all shall stand "according to the judgment of God. That is the "day of the Lord, because then all shall be as he "will, and nothing shall reverse his judgment; "and St. Paul therefore saith, 'Judge nothing "before the time, until the time of the Lord come, "the which shall light the hidden things of dark- "ness, and shall make known the counsels of the "heart.'—And this moveth many men to think "day and night upon the law of God, for that "leadeth to a knowledge of what is God's will, "and without a knowledge of this should man do "nothing, and this also moveth men to forsake "the judgment of man. To St. Paul, the truth "of holy writ, which is the will of the first Judge, "was enough until doomsday. Stewards of the "church, therefore, should not judge merely ac-

"cording to their own will, but securely accord-
"ing to the law of God, and in things of which
"they are certain. But the laws and judgments
"which antichrist has brought in, and added
"to the law of God, mar too much the church of
"Christ. For with the stewards of the church,
"the laws of antichrist are the rules by which
"they make officers therein, and to deceive the
"laity, antichrist challengeth to be in such things
"fully God's fellow; for he affirms that, if he
"judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason,
"whereas this is the highest point that falleth to
"the godhead. Popes and kings, therefore,
"should seek a reason above their own will, for
"such blasphemy often bringeth to men more
"than the pride of Lucifer. He said he would
"ascend, and be like the Most High, but he chal-
"lenged not to be the fellow of God, even with
"him, or passing him! May God bring down
"this pride, and help, that his word may reverse
"that of the fiend! Well indeed, I know, that
"when it is at the highest, this smoke shall dis-
"appear."[24] The advice of the preacher in conclusion is, that his hearers should study the will of God, and thus learn to cherish an independence of the judgments pronounced upon them by "popes or prelates," inasmuch as such decisions "stretch not to doomsday"—the period when the will of God shall be felt as supreme and unalterable.

One more extract must be sufficient to illustrate the manner in which the reformer was accus-

[24] Ibid.

CHAP. I.

tomed to notice the disorders of the hierarchy from the pulpit. "Freedom" it is remarked, "is "much coveted as men know by nature, but "much more should christian men covet the "better freedom of Christ. It is known, however, "that antichrist hath inthraled the church more "than it was under the old law, though then "the service was not to be borne. New laws are "now made by antichrist, and such as are "not founded on those of the Saviour. More "ceremonies too are now brought in than were "in the old law, and more do they tarry men in "coming to heaven, than did the traditions of the "scribes and pharisees. One cord of this thral-"dom is the lordship claimed by antichrist, "as being full lord both of spirituals and tem-"porals. Thus he turneth christian men aside "from serving Christ in christian freedom; so "much so, that they might well say as the poet "saith in his fable, the frogs said to the har-"row—'cursed be so many masters.' For in "this day, christian men are oppressed now with "popes, and now with bishops, now with car-"dinals under popes, and now with prelates under "bishops, and now their head is assailed with "censures,—in short, buffeted are they as men "would serve a football. But certainly, if the "baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of "the shoe of Christ, antichrist hath no power "thus to impede the freedom which Christ hath "bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that "they might come to the bliss of Heaven with "less difficulty, but antichrist burdens them, that "they may give him money. Foul therefore is

" this doing with respect both to God and his " law, Ever also do these hypocrites dread lest " God's law should be shewn, and they should " thus be convicted of their falsehood. For God " and his law are most powerful, and for a time " only may these deceivers hold men in the " thraldom of Satan."[25]

Extracts illustrating the theological doctrine and the devotional feeling of his parochial addresses.

But while these, and similar evils were frequently noticed in the sermons of the rector of Lutterworth, and always in this intrepid temper; the flock committed to his care, was far from being unaccustomed to the sound of themes more devotional in their character, and less connected with the passions too commonly excited by controversy. The following is the substance of a sermon delivered by him on a christmas day, and upon the passage in Isaiah, beginning with the words, " Unto us a Child is born." " On this " day we may affirm that a Child is born to us, " since Jesus, according to our belief, was this " day born. Both in figure and in letter, God " spake of old to this intent, that to us a Child " should be born in whom we should have joy. " From this speech of Isaiah, three short lessons " are to be delivered, that men may rejoice in the " after services of this Child. First, we hold it " as a part of our faith, that as our first parents " had sinned, there must be atonement made for " it according to the righteousness of God. For " as God is merciful, so is he full of righteousness. " But except he keep his righteousness in this " point, how may he judge all the world? There

[25] Ibid p. 51.

CHAP. I.

" is no sin done but what is against God, but this " sin was done directly against the Lord Al- " mighty and Allrightful. The greater also the " Lord is against whom any sin is done, the " greater always is the sin,—just as to do against " the king's bidding is deemed the greatest of " offences. But the sin which is done against " God's bidding is greater without measure. God " then, according to our belief, bid Adam that he " should not eat of the apple. Yet he broke " God's command; nor was he to be excused " therein by his own weakness, by Eve, nor by " the serpent, and hence according to the right- " eousness of God, this sin must always be pu- " nished. It is to speak lightly, to say that God " might of his mere power forgive this sin without " the atonement which was made for it, since the " justice of God would not suffer this, but re- " quires that every trespass be punished either in " earth or in hell. God may not accept a person " to forgive him his sin without an atonement, " else he must give free licence to sin both in " angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and " our God were no God!"

" Such is the first lesson we take as a part of our " faith, the second is that the person who may " make atonement for the sin of our first father, " must needs be God and man. For as man's nature " trespassed, so must man's nature render atone- " ment. An angel therefore would attempt in vain " to make atonement for man, for he has not the " power to do it, nor was his the nature that here " sinned. But since all men form one person, if " any member of this person maketh atonement,

" the whole person maketh it. But we may see that CHAP. I.
" if God made a man of nought, or strictly anew
" after the manner of Adam, yet he were bound to
" God, to the extent of his power for himself, having
" nothing wherewith to make atonement for his
" own, or for Adam's sin. Since then, atonement
" must be made for the sin of Adam as we have
" shewn, the person to make the atonement must
" be God and man, for then the worthiness of this
" person's deeds, were even with the unworthiness
" of the sin." From this necessity of an atonement for sin, and of the incarnation that it might be made, the conclusion is said to follow that the Child born, must needs be God and man. The doctrine of the discourse is then made to assume a practical bearing. " And we suppose," observes the preacher, " that this Child is only born *to* the
" men who follow him in his manner of life, for he
" was born *against* others. The men who are un-
" just and proud, and who rebel against God,
" may read their judgment in the person of Christ.
" By him, they must needs be condemned, and
" most certainly if they continue wicked toward
" his Spirit to their death. And if we covet sin-
" cerely that this Child may prove to be born to
" us; have we joy of him, and follow we him in
" these three virtues, in righteousness and meek-
" ness, and in patience for our God. For whoever
" shall be against Christ and his Spirit in these
" unto his death, must needs be condemned of
" this Child, as others must needs be saved. And
" thus the joy professed in this Child, who was
" all meekness and full of virtues, should make
" men to be children in malice, and then they

CHAP. I.

" would well keep this festival. To those who " would indulge in strife, I would say that the " Child who is born is also Prince of peace, and " loveth peace, and contemneth men contrary " to peace. Reflect we then how Christ came " in the fullness of time, when he should; and " how he came in meekness teaching us this at " his birth; and how he came in patience, con- " tinuing even from his birth unto his death; and " follow we him in these things for the joy that " we here have in him, and because this joy " in the patience of Christ, bringeth to joy that " ever shall last."[26]

The doctrines of the person of Christ, and that of his sufferings as the price of our redemption, are of frequent occurrence in these discourses. It was in the following manner that the reformer generally spoke on the latter subject. " Men " mark the passion of Christ, and print it on their " heart somewhat to follow it. It was the most " *voluntary* passion that ever was suffered, and the " most *painful.* It was most *voluntary,* and so " most meritorious. Hence, when Christ went to " Jerusalem, he foretold the form of his passion to " his disciples, and he who before concealed him- " self to come to the city, came now to his suffer- " ing in a way to shew his free will. Hence also " he saith at the supper, With desire have I " coveted to eat of this passover with you. The " desire of his godhead, and the desire of his man- " hood, moved him to eat thereof, and afterwards to " suffer. But all this was significant, and in figure

[26] Ibid.

" of his last supper which he eateth in heaven with
" the men whom he hath chosen. And since Christ
" suffered thus cheerfully for the sins of his brethren,
" they should suffer gratefully for their own sins,
" and should purpose to forsake them. This indeed
" is the cause why God would have the passion of
" Christ rehearsed—the profit of the brethren of
" Christ, and not his own. But the *pain* of Christ's
" passion, passed all other pain, for he was the most
" tender of men, and in middle age, and God by
" miracle, allowed his mind to suffer, for else by
" his joy, he might not have known sorrow. In
" Christ's passion indeed, were all circumstances
" which could make his pain great, and so make
" it the more meritorious. The place was solemn,
" and the day also, and the hour, the most so
" known to Jews, or heathen men; and the ingra-
" titude and contempt were most, for men who
" should most have loved Christ, ordained the
" foulest death in return for his deepest kindness!
" We should also believe that Christ suffered not
" in any manner, but for some certain reason; for
" he is both God and man, who made all things
" in their number, and so would frame his passion
" to answer to the greatness of man's sin. Follow
" we then after Christ in his blessed passion; and
" keep we ourselves from sin hereafter, and gather
" we a devout mind from him."[27]

The reader will remember, that these devotional instructions were prepared for the usual auditory of a parish church in the fourteenth century, and it is not often that lessons are deduced with

[27] Ibid p. 61.

CHAP. I

Doctrine of grace.

more simplicity and adaptation from the pages of inspired truth. The following passages, were intended by the preacher to explain the only sense in which he could admit that men might be said to "deserve" the felicities of heaven. "We should "know that faith is a gift of God, and that it may "not be given to men except it be graciously. "Thus, indeed, all the good which men have is of "God, and accordingly when God rewardeth a "good work of man, he crowneth his own gift. "This then is also of grace, even as all things are "of grace, that men have according to the will of "God. God's goodness is the first cause why he "confers any good on man; and so it may not be "that God doeth good to men, but if he do it "freely by his own grace; and with this under-"stood, we shall grant that men deserve of God." But the doctrine of short-sighted men "as was "Pelagius and others, who conceive that nothing "may be, unless it be of itself as are mere sub-"stances, is to be scorned and left to idiots." It is then remarked, in connection with the story of the centurion, whose faith had elicited the above observation, "Learn we of this knight to be meek "in heart and in word, and in deed; for he granted "first that he was under man's power, and yet by "power of man, he might do many things; much "more should we know that we are under God's "power, and that we may do nothing, but by the "power of God, and woe shall hereafter be to us, "if we abuse this power. This root of meekness "therefore should produce in us all other virtues." It is evident that the doctrine of these passages, dangerous as its tendencies are sometimes said to

be, was connected in the case of the reformer with no feeling but that of devotion. CHAP. I.

It is thus he endeavours to strengthen the mind of the christian worshipper, while suffering under the adversities of life, and especially from the contempt of men. "As men who are in a fever desire not that "which were best for them, so men in sin covet not "that which is best for them in this world. The "world said that the apostles were fools, and for-"saken of God; and so it would say to-day of all who "live like them; for worldly joy and earthly pos-"sessions alone pleaseth them, while of heavenly "things, and of a right following after Christ, they "savour not. And this their choice, in the pre-"sent world, is a manifest proof against them, "that in soul, they are not holy, but turned aside "to the things of the world. For as the palate of "a sick man, distempered from good meat, moveth "him to covet things contrary to his health; so it "is with the soul of man which savoureth not of the "law of God. And as the want of natural appetite "is a deadly sign to man, so a wanting of spiritual "relish for God's word, is a sign of his second "death." Yet men are said to judge of their participation in the favour of God, by the success of their worldly enterprises: but to expose this error, it is observed, "we should leave these "sensible signs, and take the example of holy "men, as of Christ, and his apostles; how they had "not their bliss on earth, but that here, Christ "ordained them pain, and the hatred of the "world, even much suffering to the men whom he "most loved,—and this, to teach us how to follow "him." It is therefore said to follow that in this

CHAP. I.

world, the marks of patient suffering, should much rather be taken as those which bespeak the love of God.[28]

Connection between faith and devotion.

The connection between this independence of terrestrial evils, and the faith of the gospel, is thus pointed out. "If thou hast a full belief of Christ, "how he lived here on the earth, and how he "overcame the world, thou also overcomest it, as "a kind son. For if thou takest heed how Christ "despised the world, and followest him here as "thou shouldst by the faith of the Father, thou "must needs overcome it. And here it is mani- "fest what many men are in this world. They "are not born of God, nor do they believe in "Christ. For if this belief were in them, they "should follow Christ in the manner of his life, "but they are not of faith, as will be known in the "day of doom. What man should fully believe "that the day of doom will be anon, and that "God shall then judge men after what they have "been in his cause, and not prepare himself to "follow Christ for this blessing thereof? Either "the belief of such men sleepeth, or they want a "right belief; since men who love this world, and "rest in the lusts thereof, live as if God had never "spoken, as in his word, or would fail to judge "them for their doing. To all christian men, "therefore, the faith of Christ's life is needful, "and hence we should know the gospel, for this "telleth the belief of Christ."[29]

[28] Ibid p. 78. [29] Ibid. p. 70.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF ATTEMPTS TOWARD A TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THIS COUNTRY BEFORE THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE——BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CLERGY——BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN——WYCLIFFE'S PURPOSE AS EMBRACING A TRANSLATION OF THE WHOLE VOLUME, AND ITS GENERAL CIRCULATION, STRICTLY A NOVELTY——THIS AFFIRMED BY KNIGHTON —— SOME CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORABLE TO THIS ENTERPRISE ——EXTRACTS EXHIBITING THE REFORMER'S MANNER OF DEFENDING THIS EFFORT——THE INSURRECTION OF THE COMMONS——A NARRATIVE OF ITS CAUSES AND CHARACTER——SIMILAR CONVULSIONS IN OTHER STATES AT THE SAME PERIOD.

CHAP. II.

THAT the gospel was embraced by many of our Celtic ancestors, previous to the close of the first century, is the general testimony of historians;[1] and three centuries intervened before that connexion between the subject provinces of Britain, and the capital of the empire which had led to this diffusion of christianity was dissolved. We have no authority, however, for supposing, that any portion of the sacred writings was possessed by the people of this island during that period, in the vernacular tongue. With the few indeed who could read, the Latin though introduced by their conquerors, was the principal object of attention;[2] and the importance of obtaining the scriptures in their own dialect which

[1] Usher, Stillingfleet, Collier.

[2] Tacitus, Vita. Agric. c. 21. Gildas, Hist. The last writer observes that from the prevalence of the Latin language, Britain might have been called a Roman rather than a British island

CHAP. II.

this circumstance served greatly to diminish, we may presume was wholly overlooked. Subsequently, the religion of the Britons must have suffered much from their protracted war with the Saxons; and after the arrival of Augustine, nearly a century was occupied, in bringing the disciples of Odin to their partial acknowledgment of the God of the christians.

Attempts toward a translation of the scriptures by the Anglo-saxons.

It was in the seventh century that Cedman, an Anglo-saxon monk, produced a composition which claimed the attention of his countrymen, as exhibiting the first application of their language to sacred poetry; and as the first attempt, to render any part of the inspired volume in the speech of our forefathers.[3] This poem, which has all the marks of the antiquity assigned to it, includes the leading events of Old Testament history, as the creation of the world,—the fall of angels, and of man,—the deluge, the departure from Egypt, the entrance upon Canaan, with some subsequent occurrences. In the following century, Aldhelm,

[3] Bede, iv. 24.—On this interesting subject Mr. Lewis's volume intitled, "A History of the English Translations of the Bible" is well known; also a lesser work by Johnson. The latter production, however, though frequently cited as an authority, and honored with a place among bishop Watson's Theological Tracts is strangely inaccurate. I have found no better guide than Mr. Baber, a gentleman to whose discernment the public are indebted for a reprint of Wycliffe's New Testament. To that work a chapter is prefixed, entitled, "An Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions of the Scriptures, previous to the Opening of the Fifteenth Century," and it determines every question respecting the state of our vernacular scriptures to the time of Wycliffe. The brief memoirs of our reformer, published in connexion with the same work, would have been noticed in the preface, had I not been sensible that the writer is too well acquainted with these things, not to be fully aware, that his notices respecting the sacred scriptures, and his enlarged and revised catalogue of the Wycliffe manuscripts, impart to that portion of his publication its chief value.

bishop of Sherborne, and Guthlac, the celebrated anchoret, are among the authors of Anglo-saxon versions of the Psalter; and the venerable Bede, prefers his claim to the honor of a literal translation of St. John's gospel.[4] A manuscript copy of the Latin gospels, with a Saxon version interlined, known by the name of the Durham book, is attributed on probable evidence to about the time of Alfred.[5] The Rushworth Gloss, is a Latin transcript of the same portion of the sacred volume, with a Saxon translation introduced after the same manner, the latter being apparently the production of the tenth century.[6] Among the valuable manuscripts of Benet College, Cambridge, is a third copy of the vernacular gospels, written a little before the conquest: and a fourth, which belongs to the same period, and appears to have been copied from the former, may be seen in the Bodleian library.[7] But an ecclesiastic, who did more than all his brethren toward supplying his countrymen with the scriptures in their own tongue, was Elfric. This industrious scholar lived during the reign of Ethelred, and subscribes himself at different periods as monk, mass priest, and abbot. In his epitome of the Old and New Testament, composed for Sigwerd, a nobleman, we are informed, that at the request of various persons, he had translated the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua and

[4] Ibid Cuthberti, Vita. Ven. Bedæ.

[5] It is preserved in the British Museum, Nero, D. iv. and is described by Mr. Baber, as the finest specimen of Saxon calligraphy and decoration extant.

[6] This is in the Bodleian, D. 24, No. 3964. It derived its name from its former possessor, John Rushworth, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn. Baber, ubi supra.

[7] Ibid.

CHAP. II.

Judges, those of Esther, Job, and Judith, also the two books of Maccabees, with part of the first and second book of Kings.[8] Alfred, whose name is associated by the admiration of our ancestors, with almost every thing enlightened in their polity or religion, is noticed as having prefixed a translation of certain passages from the mosaic writings to his code of laws; and is said to have made a considerable progress in a Saxon version of the Psalms a little previous to his death.[9]

By the Anglo-norman

This, however, is the extent of our information on this interesting question as connected with the Anglo-saxon period of our history. The Anglo-norman clergy, were far more competent to have supplied their flock with this efficient means of information; but in this respect the example of their predecessors was slighted, or we may rather suppose disapproved. Some fragments of scriptural knowledge, may have been preserved by means of certain lessons which occurred in the ritual of the period; but the first attempt after the conquest, to place any more complete portion of the scriptures before the english people, appears to have been

[8] Turner's Hist. iv. 442. Baber.—The extent of Elfric's labours are learnt, as stated above, from various incidental notices occurring in such of his works as have descended to us. In his Epitome of the Old and New Testament, he has not only made his selection from the scriptures, but has frequently added things to the sacred story from other writers. A copy of this work, printed with an english translation by William L'Isle in 1623, is in the Bodleian, and another has been for some time in my possession. It is thus it begins; "Abbot Elfrike, greeteth friendly "Sigwerd, at East Heolon. True it is I tell thee, that very wise is "he who speaketh by his doings; and well proceedeth he both with God "and with the world, who furnisheth himself with good works. And "very plain it is in holy scripture, that holy men employed in well "doing, were in this world held in good reputation."

[9] Spelman, i. 354. Prefatio Regis Aluredi, M. ad Leges suas See also Baber, 62.

made by the author of a rhyming paraphrase on the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, intitled "Ormulum."[10] Subsequent to the date of this work, which evidently belongs to one of the earliest stages of our language, we perceive a similar application of mind in a collection of metrical pieces, called Salus Animæ, or in english "Sowlehele."[11] In the huge volume thus designated, the materials are not all of the same class. The object of the compiler, or transcriber, seems to have been to furnish a complete body of legendary and scriptural history in verse, or rather to collect into one view, all the religious history he could find. It professes, however, to exhibit an outline, both of the Old and New Testament, and its composition is supposed to have preceded the opening of the fourteenth century. In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description, the offspring of the same period, and containing notices of the principal events recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus. In that collection, there is also a copy of the Psalms in english metre, which is attributed to about the year 1300; and two transcripts of nearly the same antiquity, have been preserved; the one in the Bodleian library, the other in that of Sir Robert Cotten.[12] But it is not until the middle of the following century, that we trace the remotest attempt to produce a literal translation even of detached portions of the scriptures. The effort then made was by Richard Roll, called the Her-

CHAP. II.

[10] Ibid. Bodleian. Junius i.

[11] Warton's History of English Poetry, sect. i. MSS. Bodleian, 779, Baber.

[12] Ibid. 65.

CHAP. II.

mit of Hampole. His labours also, were restricted to a little more than half the book of Psalms, and to these a devotional commentary was annexed. Contemporary with this recluse, were some devout men among the clergy, who produced vernacular translations of such passages from the scriptures as were prominent in the offices of the church; while others ventured to complete separate versions of the gospels or the epistles. The persons thus laudably employed were certainly few in number; but parts of St. Mark and of St. Luke, and of several among the epistles, are included in the results of their labour which have descended to us. It should also be stated, that these versions, which are of various merit, were generally guarded by a comment.[13]

Novelty of Wycliffe's design in translating the scriptures

From these details, as the sum of our information, on the point to which they refer, it is evident, first,—that a literal translation of the entire scriptures, the laborious enterprise completed by Wycliffe about this period, was strictly a novel event in our religious history; and secondly,—that the publication of such a work, to be the property not of distinguished individuals but of the people in general, was a measure far beyond any thing contemplated by his precursors in the labours of translation. The only ground of suspicion in the least degree plausible, as to the claims of Wycliffe to the originality asserted, is contained in a production described as "a Prologue to the Bible," and in a manuscript of the Bodleian. The writer of the prologue speaks of being employed in translating

[13] Ibid. 66. 67. Lewis.

the whole Bible, and refers also to an existing version. But that this document has been erroneously attributed to Wycliffe, is unquestionable, as it adverts to more than one event subsequent to the decease of our reformer.[14] In the Oxford manuscript also, every thing depends on the date attached to it; but here an erasure has most evidently taken place; and it is hardly to be doubted that to supply the vacancy thus produced would be to make the work a production of the year 1408.[15] The author of the prologue noticed above refers to an "Englyshe Bible of late trans-"lated," by which he evidently intends that produced by the rector of Lutterworth. In the esteem of the reformer's opponents, to have produced our first translation of the sacred writings was a very doubtful honor; but it is nevertheless one of which they have been not a little concerned to deprive him.

Testmony of Knighton respecting the reformer's translations of the scriptures.

Had their zeal in this particular, been conducted with any appearance of success, the testimony of Knighton must have been sufficient for ever to determine the question with the unprejudiced enquirer. That historian must be allowed to have known the customs of his contemporaries, and especially the place assigned by his own order to the inspired records, quite as well as any mo-

[14] It is a curious production, and has been twice printed. The references to John Gerson, to an enactment of the University of Oxford, and to the proceedings of the parliament in 1395, determine its date as subsequent to the time of Wycliffe.

[15] Baber. Historical Account and Memoirs of Wycliffe. The present state of the numerals referred to is as follows, MCCC VIII. To supply the vacancy would be, we may reasonably suppose, to form the date assumed in the text.

CHAP. II.

dern writer. Adverting to the zeal of Wycliffe, in rendering the scriptures the property of the people, he thus writes. "Christ delivered his "gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, "that they might administer to the laity and to "weaker persons, according to the state of the "times and the wants of men. But this master "John Wycliffe translated it out of latin into en- "glish, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to "women who could read, than it had formerly been "to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of "them who had the best understanding. And in "this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trod- "den under foot of swine, and that which was be- "fore precious to both clergy and laity, is rendered "as it were the common jest of both. The jewel "of the church is turned into the sport of the "people, and what was hitherto the principal gift "of the clergy and divines, is made for ever com- "mon to the laity."[16] It was thus the canon of Leicester bewailed the translation of the Bible

[16] De Eventibus Col. 2644. To the same effect is the decision of an english council in 1408, with the archbishop Arundel at its head. "The "translation of the text of holy scriptures out of one tongue into another "is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to "make the verse in all respects the same. Therefore we enact and "ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any "text of holy scripture into the english tongue, or any other, by way of "book or treatise; nor let any such book or treatise now lately com- "posed in the time of John Wycliffe aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to "be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under "pain of the greater excommunication." Wilkins Concilia. iii. 317. The spirit of this enactment was evidently that of the majority of the clergy in the age of Wycliffe. He describes them as affirming it to be "heresy "to speak of the holy scriptures in english," but this is said to be a con- demnation of "the Holy Ghost, who first gave the scriptures in tongues "to the apostles of Christ, as it is written, to speak the word in all "languages that were ordained of God under heaven." Wicket.

into the speech of the nation. To him it not only appeared as a novelty in the history of offences, but as an innovation on ecclesiastical discipline, fraught with profanity and sacrilege, and tending to destroy even the appearances of religion; nor can we forbear to regard his sentiments, in this respect, as those of his order in the fourteenth century. The historian no doubt knew that fragments, and even considerable portions, of holy writ, had been clothed in the unconsecrated dialect of his country; but he also knew, that hitherto they were merely parts of that secreted volume which had been so rendered, and that these curious documents had rarely travelled beyond the precincts of the cloister. Hence to invite the community without distinction to the study of the gospel, exhorting them to regulate their present conduct and their hopes and fears in relation to the future purely by its sanctions, is described as the assuming of ground for which no precedent could be pleaded, and is justly viewed as threatening the whole fabric of ecclesiastical power with dissolution.

Previous to the conquest, and through a considerable interval afterwards, there was but little evil to be apprehended from any such employment of the Bible. The repose of ignorance was too profound to be readily broken; and the vassalage both of the body and of the mind, had been too little disturbed to admit of being speedily removed. But in the age of Wycliffe, the aspect of society in England, retained but a faint tracing of its earlier features. The augmented population of the country, the progress of commerce, and of a representative government, and the partial re-

CHAP. II.

vival of learning, had all contributed to improve the capacities of the nation; and together with the bolder encroachments of the papacy, and that spirit of complaint and resistance which these had produced; were pre-eminently favorable to the zeal of our reformer, as employed in applying the popular language to the pure records of the gospel. His antagonists, we have seen, were by no means insensible to the probable results of the enterprise in which his energies were engaged; and to his own discernment they were obvious in a much greater degree. He knew that to render the contents of the Bible familiar to the people, was to introduce a light which must impart a faithful colouring to the actions of men; and that ignorance and irreligion might well tremble for their sway, when thus brought into nearest connection with their opposites. Nearly twenty years had now passed since his first dispute with the mendicants, and during this period his writings disclose a growing conviction as to the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the importance of the right of private judgment. The success, also, which attended his discussions on these points, evidently prepared him for his present effort; the effect of which, according to his enemies, was to make the matters of the gospel revelation better known to the laity, and even to females, than they had hitherto been to the most distinguished among the clergy.[17]

Some extracts, illustrative of the arguments

[17] Knighton, Col. 2644. Another fact which was highly favorable to this great work of the reformer, is thus briefly and luminously stated by Mr. Baker: "Englishmen were now beginning to be more attentive to "their own tongue. Before the conquest, the popular language had "been invaded by the Normannic. After that event, as the Norman lords

CHAP. II.

with which the reformer opposed the clamours of his adversaries on this question, will be expected by the reader. These we might select from nearly the whole of his writings, subsequent to the year 1378. In one of his earliest vindications he thus writes; "As it is evident that the truth of the "christian faith becomes more obvious the more "the faith itself is known, and that lord bishops "condemn in the ear of secular lords what is "faithful and true, on account of hatred to the "person who maintains it; honest men are bound "to declare the doctrine which they hold, not "only in latin, but in the vulgar tongue, that the "truth may be more plainly, and more widely "known." The writer then refers to an english

Wycliffe's manner of defending his conduct on this point.

"increased in power, their tongue became the language of polished "society, of the laws, and of the pleadings in the courts of judicature. "Latin was used for the services of the church, and the general purposes "of literature; and the Anglo-saxon remained chiefly confined to the "commonality. In the thirteenth century, the popular language began "in some degree to recover its rank; the nobles, and the higher classes "of society, did not, as heretofore, disdain to resort to it as a colloquial "tongue; and original works, as well as translations from the produc- "tions of authors, who had written in french, now began to appear in an "english dress. But at this period, it must be allowed our language "was rough and unpolished, and those who wrote in it were authors "who possessed few ideas of taste or elegance. In proportion, how- "ever, as the tyrannical power of the barons declined, and as the paths "which led to honor and distinction became more open to commoners; "the english tongue in the fourteenth century became more general, "and its improvements were considerable. The accessions it had "received, and the changes it had experienced within the last three "centuries, were at this period numerous and striking: for our language "as it was now spoken by the noble and the learned, was considerably "enriched by words borrowed from the roman and french dialects, and "much altered in its pronunciation, its form, and its terminations. "Among the lower orders of the people, however, upon whom refinement "makes but slow advances, english, with respect to its great mass, pre- "served more of its saxon origin and phraseology. Such was the state "of the vernacular tongue at the time in which Wiclif wrote. The "reformer quickly discerned the advantage which might be derived from "this propitious circumstance." Memoirs of Wiclif, 36, 37.

CHAP. II.

treatise which he had previously addressed to secular lords, and in which he had urged them to regulate their life "exclusively according to the "law of Christ." That work is now lost, but the latin composition, under the same title, is preserved, and in this the author proceeds to state that "those heretics ought not to be heard, who imagine that temporal lords should not possess "the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them "to know what may be learnt from the lips of "their priests and prelates." The error of this doctrine is thus exposed: "As the faith of the "church is contained in the scriptures, the more "these are known in an orthodox sense, the better. And since secular men should assuredly "understand the faith, it should be taught them in "whatever language is best known to them. Inasmuch, also, as the doctrines of our faith are "more clearly and precisely expressed in the "scriptures, than they may possibly be by priests, "—seeing, if one may venture so to speak, that "many prelates are but too ignorant of scripture, "while others conceal parts of scripture,—and as "the verbal instructions of priests have many "other defects; the conclusion is abundantly "plain, that believers should ascertain for themselves the matters of their faith, by having the scriptures in a language which they "fully understand. Besides, it was by faith, as "described by the apostle, (Heb. chap. xi,) that "the saints of old overcame kingdoms, and "hastened to their own country. Why, then "should not the things of faith be disclosed to the "people now, so that they may comprehend them

" more clearly? He, in consequence, who shall " prevent this or murmur against it, does his ut- " most to continue the people in a state of unbelief " and condemnation. Hence, also, the laws made " by prelates are not to be received as matters of " faith, nor are we to confide in their public in- " structions, or in any of their words, but as they " are founded on holy writ; for according to the " constant doctrine of Augustine, the scriptures " contain the whole of truth;[18] and this translation " of them should therefore do at least this good, " viz. placing bishops and priests above suspicion " as to the parts of it which they profess to ex- " plain. Other means also, as prelates, the pope, " and friars, may prove defective; and to provide " against this, Christ and his apostles, evangelized " the greater portion of the world, by making " known the scriptures in a language which was " familiar to the people. To this end, indeed, did " the Holy Spirit endow them with the know- " ledge of all tongues. Why, therefore, should " not the living disciples of Christ do as they did, " opening the scriptures to the people so clearly " and plainly that they may verily understand " them, since, except to the unbeliever disposed " to resist the Holy Spirit, the things contained in " scripture are no fiction?" The reformer then solemnly inculcates the doctrine of individual responsibility as extending to all the matters of faith and practice. From the certainty, also, that

[18] Doctrina Christiana. lib. ii. in fine ep. ad Volusianum. cited by Lewis c. v. Walden, the known antagonist of Wycliffe, affirmed that " the " decrees of bishops in the church are of greater authority and dignity " than is the authority of the scriptures." Walden. Doc. Tri. i. lib. ii. c. 21.

CHAP. II.

the answer of a prelate or a canonist will be of no avail, in the day when each man shall stand before the judgment-seat of the Redeemer, he again vindicates his appeal to the right of private judgment, and urges on the laity the duty of a devout attention to whatever may promote their faith in the grace of the Saviour and obedience to his will. From motives thus enlightened, did Wycliffe prosecute his translation of the Bible. How far he was assisted in this great work is unknown. There is a notice attached to one of his Bibles, which attributes a translation of a portion of Baruch to Nicholas Hereford. The statement is in less durable ink and by a different hand from the volume itself, but is probably correct. We know that copies of the whole or of parts of the vernacular scriptures were now multiplied with surprising rapidity.[19]

[19] MS. Speculum Secularium Dominorum. Usser. De Script. 160. c. v. Lewis, c. v. Baber's Historical Account, 69. When certain objections were urged against translating the scriptures into english, it was remarked that the same might be said of rendering them from the greek into latin, since it was certain that the latins had not always used their version without abusing it. And men there were who did not hesitate to go the length of affirming that evil must result from submitting the scriptures to an indiscriminate inspection in any language. It is thus that William Butler, a franciscan, and an opponent of Wycliffe, writes on this point, "The prelates ought not to allow that any person should read "the scriptures translated into latin at pleasure; because, as expe- "rience proves, this has been the occasion of many falling into heresies "and errors. It is not, therefore, wise that any one whensoever and "wheresoever he will, should be left to the eager study of the scriptures." Usser. de Script. 163. Lewis, c. v. Such was the danger apprehended from this source, that some twenty years after Wycliffe's decease, it was made a law of the university of Oxford "that no man should learn divi- "nity, neither holy writ, except he had done his form in art; that is, that "hath commenced in art and hath been regent two years after, which "would be nine years or ten before he would learn holy writ!" Elucidarium Bibliorum, c. xiii. Previous to the decision of the council of Trent on that subject, many sound catholics discarded the apocryphal writings which had become appended to the Old Testament. (Cosin on the Canon.)

Among the manuscripts which have escaped the fury of our native inquisitors, are several which appear to have been completed before the decease of the reformer. The effect we learn from other sources besides the invectives of Knighton. It was at no mean costs of labour, of reproach, and of danger; and with a view evidently, to the accomplishment of purposes generous as those to which the zeal of primitive evangelists was devoted, that this service was performed. In the page of history its memorial is preserved, and preserved as that of an achievement which of itself must vest the name of Wycliffe with a peculiar halo, in the recollections of every man regarding the dissolution of the papal thraldom in this island, as the fall of ignorance, oppression, and impiety.

Insurrection of the commons.

But while the reformer was employed in this master-effort to enlighten the piety of his countrymen, an insurrection broke out among the populace, and one which threatened the most serious evils both to the church and the state. Had the name of Wycliffe been wholly unconnected with this memorable commotion, to have distinctly investigated its causes and its character, would not have been foreign from the design of this narrative. But the enemies of the rector of Lutterworth, cease not to insinuate, that the violence of the insurgents arose, in no small degree, from the ten-

Wycliffe was guided chiefly by the authority of Jerome, and retained but such books in the sacred canon as are at present received by the protestant churches. "Satis est (ecclesiam) pro suâ militiâ habere 22 libros "de veteri testamento authenticos * * * Non oportet ecclesiam militan- "tem illis libris credere tanquam authenticis. De Veritate Scripturæ." Yet to the close of his life he continued to cite the apocryphal books as a reputable, though not as an inspired authority. Some extracts from the reformer's translation of the Old Testament, may be seen in the Appendix, No. I.

CHAP. II.

dency of his projected innovations on the religious system of the period. The digression is thus rendered a duty.

Narrative of its causes and effects.

We have seen that Richard's first parliament was composed of very discordant elements.[20] The system of taxation also, had long been so far oppressive, as to call forth the loud and the almost unceasing murmurs of the community. It was not without reason therefore, that the bishop of Rochester discoursed to the parties assembled at the coronation, on the importance of dismissing petty feuds, of encouraging private virtue, and of avoiding all needless exaction from the people.[21] In the parliament of the following year, it was stated by the chancellor that Cherbourgh, Brest, Calais, Bourdeaux, and Bayonne, still acknowledged the sovereignty of England: that these formed most important entrances into France: and that a moderate expenditure would be sufficient to retain them. But the commons, whether suspecting the sincerity of this plea, or really wise enough to wish the abandonment of the meditated conquest of the rival country, expressed themselves opposed to any grants of the public money, to be expended on garrisons beyond the limits of the kingdom. In reply to this, it was urged that the towns adverted to were "the barbicans of "England," and compelled to relinquish the above, and some other pretexts, a subsidy, though on a reduced scale was reluctantly voted.[22] The interval, however, to the meeting of the parliament in 1379, only witnessed the increasing difficulties

Distresses of the government.

[20] Vol. 1. Chap. iv. Rot. Parl. iii. 3—7.
[21] Wals. 196. [22] Rot. Parl. iii. 56, 57.

of the government; the crown jewels had been pledged to meet the existing demands; and the commons again uttered the language of surprise and displeasure, nor did they yield their assent to the new subsidy proposed until nine persons had been appointed to ascertain the real cause of these alarming exigencies. Still disaster or extravagance attended the ministers of the sovereign, and to a repetition of the recent claims on the property of the community it was replied, that had the king been well advised in his measures and expences, the impoverished commons would not have been exposed to this series of unreasonable demands. It was in consequence required, and as the condition of the grant to be made, that as the king was now "of good discretion," the council of twelve which had been appointed by his first parliament should be removed: that commissioners should be immediately chosen to investigate the expences of the royal household: and that such faults as might be discovered should be stated to the king, and corrected. A few months only intervened between the dissolution of this parliament, and the convening of another. The king was now declared to be enormously in debt, and the commons in accepting the office of the crown to examine the public accounts,[23] found the exchequer involved to the extent of a hundred and sixty thousand pounds. This was pronounced to be "most outrageous and insupportable."[24] The debate, however, which ensued, ended in the adop-

[23] This offer was a novelty in our parliamentary history, and forcibly demonstrates the necessities of the court.

[24] Rot. Parl. iii. 71—90.

CHAP. II.

tion of a pole tax,—a mode of contribution which was determined by the gradations of society.[25] But even this grant, probably from the ignorance of statistics common to the period, failed to meet a moiety of the expence which had been incurred within six months by the expedition to Britany alone. The tax was accordingly renewed, and upon an increased ratio; but whether from timidity, or negligence, on the part of the collectors; or from malversation in the court, this imposition failed to realize the amount of the former.[26] A desperate measure was now resorted to, and the guilt of the insurrection which followed, must be attributed mainly, if not entirely, to its abettors.

Immediate cause of the insurrection.

Four persons proffered their services to ascertain the correctness of the payments made by Kent, Norfolk, and their neighbourhood. This offer was accepted, and in their exactions these civic inquisitors were stimulated by the prospect of a large reward, and by their conviction that the scrutiny of the court would be but feebly exercised with respect to the mode in which the contribution might be obtained, should the amount be such as to remove its present embarrassment.[27] The last provision of the parliament in relation to this tax, had rendered each person liable at the age of fifteen; and we may conceive of the many lesser insults which were offered to the already irritated feelings of the people by these collectors, from the circumstance that as often as the age

[25] The following was the rate of contribution imposed on the higher classes. A duke 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* an earl or a countess 4*l.* a baron, bannaret, baroness, or knight, 2*l.* a bachelor, an esquire, and the widows of such 1*l.* a serjeant 2*l.* a judge 5*l.* Rot. Parl. iii. 57.

[26] Ibid. 90.

[27] Knighton, 2632, 2633.

of the females in a household became the matter of dispute, these ruffians insisted on a mode of ascertaining the fact which outraged every feeling of modesty. To save their daughters from the treatment with which they were menaced, many parents submitted to the imposition where it was unjust.[28] But to suppose that this species of despotism could be long endured, must be to err very widely in judging of the spirit of our ancestors in the fourteenth century.

The men of Kent were first to deliberate on the duty of resistance, but no leader appeared to command their confidence. A baker of Fobbing, in Essex, either more courageous than his neighbours, or less sensible to danger, was the first to raise the standard of revolt.[29] The populace applauded his example, and the flame once kindled, fled instantaneously through that county, and through the towns and villages of Kent. Belknape, chief justice of the common pleas, was dispatched to restore tranquillity among the Essex men by inflicting a signal punishment on the leading insurgents. But as the grand jury began to find indictments, the multitude rose, burst into their apartments, and cutting off their heads, compelled the judge to swear that he would desist from all such proceedings. Two efforts of the same description were subsequently made in Kent, but in both instances, as in the present, the effect was rather to augment than to subdue the disaffection.[30] It was in the month of May that the men of Essex assembled to the amount of five thousand, armed with almost every variety of weapon.

[28] Ibid. [29] Ibid. 2632. [30] Stowe, 284.

CHAP. II.

To these additions were daily made, and at the head of this growing multitude was an obscure individual known in the records of the period under the assumed name of Jack Straw. As the effect of accident, a person equally humble in his origin, and bearing the name of Wat Tyler, or Walter the Tyler, was raised to the same distinction by the populace of Kent.[31] Walter was a tradesman in the town of Dartford. During his absence from home, a collector of the obnoxious tax entered his house, and a dispute presently arose between its mistress and the officer, respecting the age of a young female who stood in the apartment. To secure the sum demanded, the servant of the government proceeded toward that inspection of the girl's person which, as the shortest mode of ending such discussions, had been attempted in previous instances. The indignation of the mother, and the terror of the daughter, were instantly vented in loud cries, their neighbours came running to the spot, and tidings of the outrage reaching the ear of Wat Tyler, he abandoned his work, fled through the town with his tool in his hand, and placing himself before the incendiary, demanded in the spirit of a man and a father, on what authority he had dared so to conduct himself. But the knave was inured to his business: his language became abusive: and he descended to level a blow at his opponent. This was not to be borne, the insulted parent avoided the weapon raised against him, and with a single stroke of his lathing instrument—still in his hand—laid the agent of oppres-

Rise of Wat Tyler.

[31] Wals. 258. Knighton, 2633. 2634. Stowe, 284.

sion dead at his feet. A new scene now opened to the Tyler of Dartford. He stood committed against the government of his country, and could see no prospect of safety, but in exile, or in the favor of the people, and the latter, uncertain as its power or continuance might be, he would probably deem his best security. The population of the immediate neighbourhood gathered instantly around him: expressed their admiration of his conduct: and vowed to defend him against any movements of his enemies. Within a few weeks Walter appears in the vicinity of the capital, as the leader of armed men, who with their followers, are presumed to have numbered a hundred thousand persons.

Hitherto the lords of the aristocracy, who were regarded as the counsellors of the sovereign, whether churchmen or seculars, appear to have been the exclusive object of resentment, At Maidstone the prison of the archbishop was broken open, and one John Ball, described as a profligate and revolutionary priest, was set at liberty; and it is said was announced as the future primate.[32] To the day, however, in which the insurgents appeared on Blackheath, the oath exacted of their followers was fidelity to Richard and the commons; and also that no king should be acknowledged by the name of John, a provision which plainly referred to the duke of Lancaster.[33] To the approaching multitude a messenger was now dispatched, who demanded in the name of the king, the cause of this tumult; and it was replied, that they sought an audience of the sove-

[32] Knighton. [33] Wals. 258. Rot. Parl. iii. 99.

CHAP. II.

reign. Some of the counsellors of Richard advised his compliance, but Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor of the realm, opposed the measure, and indulged in the most contemptuous language respecting the parties who had thus ventured to claim the royal notice. Unfortunately, his advice, and his expressions reached the ear of the malcontents, and they were not to be forgotten.[34] The magistrates of the metropolis would have closed their gates against Walter, and the host of his adherents, but the populace within shared in the discontent manifested without, and passing London Bridge, the tide of the provincials flowed unchecked into the city.[35] The king with a few members of his court, and about two hundred knights, fled to the protection of the tower. Some days however passed, and the multitude, undisciplined as it appeared, was kept from violence: paid for the whole of their provisions: and continued to express it as their determination to return to their home, as soon as the traitors of the land should be secured and punished.[36] But time was no longer to be lost, and Richard at length agreed to confer with their leaders at Mile End. There the king granted a charter, which declared the parties assembled free, and abolished all servitude and villanage. But while the main body of the disaffected were thus employed, a rabble which still lingered near the Tower, suddenly collected their strength, and forced an entrance. Overpowering the knights within, they seized the archbishop, the treasurer of the realm, Legg, who had been

Violence of the insurgents.

[34] Wals. 259. [35] Ibid. [36] Ibid. 260.

commissioner of the pole-tax, and several others. These they reproached as traitors, and in the madness of popular triumph, cut off their heads, and bore them on lances through the streets.[37] CHAP. II.

Every thing recorded of the insurgents from this unhappy day, is marked by violence, and the wildest disorder. Whether suspecting that no faith could be placed in the promises of a court which had suffered so greatly from them, or intoxicated beyond their power of resistance by apparent success, it appears that through the week ensuing, their chief employments were pillage, drunkenness, and murder. Three times their demands on the government were complied with, but without allaying the tumult; and in Smithfield, Richard again descended to confer with them. Walter, it appears was still the person of principal influence with the multitude, and it is probable that he had yielded in some degree to the growing spirit of insubordination. By the attendants of Richard, the freedom of his conduct was deemed an insult to their sovereign; and as the king hesitated to pronounce the abolition of the forest and game laws, the bold insurgent approached so near to the royal person, as to excite an instant suspicion of some sinister design. Walworth, the mayor of London, seized his spear, and in a moment it was planted in the neck of the rebel; and from the indignation of another attendant, the misguided man received a second wound in the side. He rose convulsively, once and again, but in a few minutes was no more. His followers, roused by the deed,

Death of Tyler, and dispersion of his followers.

[37] Knighton, 2674. 2635. Wilkins, iii. 153. Wals. 260—263.

CHAP. II.

instantly grasped their weapons to avenge it; when the king in the confidence of youth, and aware perhaps that the disaffection even yet referred not to himself, fled to their ranks, and exclaimed, "Why, my liege men, this clamour, "will you kill your king? Heed not the death of "a traitor, I will be your leader; come, follow "me to the fields, and what you ask, you shall "have." Charmed with the spirit and confidence of the youthful monarch, they obeyed his summons; but while engaged in this parley, were alarmed by the approach of an armed force, under the command of Sir Robert Knowles:—the panic was suddenly diffused, and the followers of Walter fled in every direction to assemble no more. The king humanely forbad pursuit, but the concessions which had been made, were all rescinded, and some hundreds of the offenders in their various counties were doomed to perish by the hand of the executioner.[38]

The reader must be aware, that in proportion to the degeneracy of the ecclesiastical orders, has been their adherence to the maxim, that to diminish the popular reverence of the ministers of religion, must be in the same degree to impair the authority of the sovereign. Nor is the plea always devoid of truth. But it is one which has too frequently aided unworthy men in annexing the worst penalties of civil jurisprudence, to what they have judged as delinquencies in religious opinion. It would have been singular, therefore, had no effort been made to exhibit the religious

[38] Knighton, 2636, 2637. Wals. 264, 265. Rymer, vii. 316, 317. Rot. Parl. iii. 103. 111.

doctrine of our reformer, so hostile to the general pretensions of the existing clergy, as scattering the seeds of civil disaffection. Its influence, however, as far as we can ascertain, was rather to restrain the violence of the insurgent multitude, than to produce their spirit of misrule.

Similar convulsions in other states at this period.

The fact that various countries in which no reformer of Wycliffe's character was known, had recently become the scene of similar tumults, and such as were peculiarly hostile to many of the prevailing superstitions, might be sufficient to explain the origin of the convulsion in 1381, without attributing it in any important degree to the labours of the rector of Lutterworth.

In France

Nearly thirty years previously, the disbanded mercenaries of France had filled the provinces of that kingdom with their depredations; and unawed by the weapons of the church, had compelled the pontiff to redeem himself in Avignon, at the cost of forty thousand crowns.[39] These banditti who were known by the name of "the companies," were no sooner conducted by the celebrated du Guesclin to the war against Peter of Castile, than the peasantry of the french provinces rose against their rulers, and their insurrection resembling that of the english populace in 1381, both in its origin, and in various of its features, was more extended, of longer duration, and marked by much greater atrocities.[40] The increase of taxation which had now become common to nearly all the governments

[39] Froissart, 187. These daring marauders were led by one Arnaud de Cervole, a chieftain who is described as holding an ecclesiastical benifice, and as being known in consequence by the name of l'Archiprêtre.

[40] D'Achery, Spicilegium, iii. 114.

CHAP. II.

of Europe, was accompanied by an increase of wastefulness on the part of sovereigns and their ministers; and unfortunately for such propensities, there arose at the same time a powerful disposition on the part of the people to criticise the measures of their rulers, as those of servants in relation to the community. From these causes sprung the memorable rebellion of the Flemings; and over other states, their example and successes shed a dangerous influence. It was at this crisis, and while the disorders which we have noticed as arising in England, were on the eve of breaking forth, that the peasantry of France again betrayed every sign of restlessness; and the citizens of Paris, became foremost in resisting the demands of the national authorities on their pecuniary resources. It was believed also by Froissart, that had the efforts of the french government to quell the insurrection of the citizens of Ghent, and their various adherents proved a failure, the flame of rebellion must have been speedily diffused through the whole of their own territories. It was likewise the opinion of that historian, that the rising under Wat Tyler, would hardly have occurred in the absence of the stimulus supplied by these examples. Nothing indeed can be more evident than that such convulsive appearances were less the result of any local peculiarities, than of a general movement in the system of European society. From various causes, the notions of a representative government, and of responsible rulers had become in a great degree familiar to the popular apprehension, and by this new state of things, the authorities which were not obviously

And Flanders.

founded in public utility, were every where menaced with overthrow.[41]

Disorders arising from the established superstitions.

But there were powerful ebullitions of popular feeling during the middle ages, and such as not a little affected the pretensions both of kings and churchmen; where no burden imposed by the civil authorities, nor any thing resembling the spirit of enlightened reformation in relation to the church, can be assigned as the cause. It is the statement of an historian equally distinguished by his research, and by the sobriety of his views, that "no "denomination of christians has produced, or even "sanctioned, more fanaticism than the church of "Rome."[42] It is certain that during the ages adverted to, its votaries were familiarised from their cradle with the doctrine of supernatural agencies in the government of the world; and that they were as commonly in total ignorance respecting the nature of every such interposition. The term miracle, was almost deprived of its meaning, from the frequency with which it was conferred on real or imaginary occurrences; and the gifts of inspiration were believed to be scarcely less prevalent. Both were appealed to as rendering their

[41] Froissart, c. 37. 84. 120. Mr. Hallam remarks, while referring to these facts, "I would advise the historical student to acquaint himself "with these transactions and with the corresponding tumults at Paris. "They are among the eternal lessons of history, for the unjust encroach-"ments of courts, the intemperate passions of the multitude, the ambition "of demagogues, the cruelty of victorious factions, will never cease to "have their parrallels and their analogies; while the military achieve-"ments of distant times afford, in general, no instruction, and can hardly "occupy too little of our time in historical studies." I. 91. Froissart's account of the english insurrection differs in some important particulars from that given above, but I have followed the authorities which appeared to me to be most correctly informed.

[42] Hallam, iii. 341.

CHAP. II.

sanction to the crusades, and those memorable convulsions, which so materially disturbed the frame work of society in Europe, were to supply the elements of many a kindred phrensy.

In the year 1211, an army of children amounting to several myriads, and commanded by a child, left Germany in quest of the holy land. At Genoa the sea presented an obstacle which their wisdom appears not to have anticipated, and if thirty thousand of their number returned to Marseilles, it was to be sold to the Saracens, or to perish by hunger and the sword.[43] The first remarkable appearance of this fanatical temper, apart from the object of the crusades, is said to have been in the reign of Philip-Augustus. When the mercenaries of that prince and those of our Henry the second were disbanded, the south of France was selected as the scene of their predatory warfare. To protect the country from the growing outrage of these marauders, one Durand, a carpenter, placed himself at the head of the irritated inhabitants. He is said to have been deluded into this enterprise, by an artifice which had announced him as the favourite of the Virgin; his followers from the covering they wore, were called brethren of the white caps; and to secure the divine approbation of their object, they bound themselves to appear in unpretending apparel; to abstain from taverns; and to avoid the guilt of swearing, gaming, and perjury. As with the commons in England, the partial success of these redressers of grievances produced intoxication, and presuming to forbid the usual exactions of the feudal aristocracy, on pain of their

[43] Muratori, A. D. 1211. Velly, Hist. iv. 206.

fraternal displeasure, their influence was soon doomed to disappear.[44] "During the captivity of "St. Louis in Egypt," observes Mr. Hallam, "an extensive and terrible ferment broke out in "Flanders, and spread from thence over great "part of France. An impostor declared himself "commissioned by the virgin to preach a crusade, "not to the rich and noble, who for their pride "had been rejected of God, but to the poor. His "disciples were called Pastoureaux, the simplicity of shepherds having exposed them more "readily to this delusion. In a short time they "were swelled by the confluence of abundant "streams to a moving mass of a hundred thousand "men, divided into companies, with banners bearing a cross and a lamb, and commanded by the "impostor's lieutenants. He assumed a priestly "character, preaching, absolving, annulling marriages. At Amiens, Bourges, Orleans, and Paris "itself, he was received as a divine prophet. "Even the regent Blanche, for a time, was led "away by the popular tide. His main topic "was reproach of the clergy for their idleness "and corruption, a theme well adapted to the "ears of the people who had long been uttering "similar strains of complaint. In some towns his "followers massacred the priests and plundered "the monasteries. The government at length "began to exert itself, and the public sentiment "turning against the authors of so much confusion, this rabble was put to the sword or dissipated. Seventy years afterwards, an insur-

CHAP. II.

[44] Hallam, iii. 295. Du Cange, v. Capuciati.

CHAP. II.

"rection almost exactly parallel to this burst "out under the same pretence of a crusade. "These insurgents, too, bore the name of Pas- "toureaux, and their short career was distin- "guished by a general massacre of the jews."[45]

But an exhibition of this kind, which extended more generally from the populace to the higher classes was that of the flagellants. In Italy, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, numbers of these fanatics were seen in the streets and public roads. They usually passed two by two, forming extended processions, and while they inflicted on each other the torture of a leathern scourge, made the air to resound with groans, or hymns of lamentation. This mania, though it failed to obtain the sanction of the church, and was seriously discountenanced by the magistrate, wore so much the appearance of sincerity, that it spread through various of the continental states, and was not unknown to this country.[46] The story also of the Italian Bianchi, is amply recorded by those who were witnesses of their extravagant singularities; and while referring to a period so late as the opening of the fifteenth century, is fraught with the same proofs of religious derangement, and criminal propensity;—demonstrating the folly, of regarding the gloom of the popular mind, as affording any permanent security against the most fatal igniting of its passions.[47]

---

[45] View of the State of Europe, iii. 387, 388.

[46] Froissart, ii. 263. Wals. 169.

[47] It would not appear to be correct, as stated by Mr. Hallam, that the sect of the flagellants "soon died away," (iii. 344.) Mosheim, in his His.

CHAP. II.

Wycliffe's innocence with respect to the disorders of 1381.

The reader will perceive from these details, that to account for the insurrection of the commons under Wat Tyler, it is by no means necessary that we should be apprised of the labours of Wycliffe and his followers, or that we should be aware of such a mind as existing in this country at the period.[48] Covulsions, equally menacing both to the civil, and the ecclesiastical authorities of the age, we perceive as the result of causes to which such influence as that of our reformer bore no essential relation. The common discernment of

tory of the Fourteenth Century, (iii. 381, 382.) describes them not only as existing, but as become more extravagant than ever in their speculations and their practices. "These flagellants" he observes, "whose enthusaism infected every rank, sex, and age, were much worse than the old ones. They not only supposed that God might be prevailed upon to show mercy to those who underwent voluntary punishments, but propagated other tenets highly injurious to religion. They held, among other things, that flagellation was of equal virtue with baptism, and the other sacraments; that the forgiveness of all sins was to be obtained by it from God without the merits of Jesus Christ; that the old law of Christ was soon to be abolished, and that a new law, enjoining the baptism of blood, to be administered by whipping, was to be substituted in its place." It was a century after the exploits of this sect had made much noise in Germany, that they made their appearance in England. In the latter half of the fourteenth century another sect arose, which by violent dancing and other peculiarities announced themselves the votaries of mirth rather than of sadness. These were pitied by many of the clergy, as possessed with devils, and some instances of successful exorcism are on record for the edification of future times, *ibid.* But such extravagances were the legitimate and constant result of the ecclesiastical system which prevailed during the middle ages, and the germ of protestantism which survived in the midst of them, has been the scape-goat to which catholics impute the guilt of every disorder belonging to that dreary interval.

[48] Froissart, who is minute in his account of the english insurrections, repeatedly asserts that John of Gaunt was the peculiar object of the popular resentment, but except as arising from the declamations of John Ball, never for a moment suspects a religious motive as having produced any portion of the tumult. His humane opinion, indeed, is, that it all arose from "the too great comfort of the commonalty," who at the same time are described as more oppressed with respect to the services connected with villanage, than any people in Europe. Hist. ubi supra.

CHAP. II.

men could hardly fail to be offended, on witnessing the oppressions which so frequently proceeded from the state, and the corruptions which had so long disfigured every portion of the church. And if in attempting the work of improvement, the remedy proved in some instances more afflictive than the disease; this want of skilfulness in the men who sought the renovation of decayed or corrupted institutions, must be numbered among the evils introduced by the advocates of lawless authority on the one hand, and those of superstition on the other. Difficult, indeed, would it have been in such an age, to have uttered any marked generosity of sentiment in relation to the people, without becoming numbered by their various oppressors with the most revolutionary and dangerous members of the state. That the adversaries of Wycliffe, should impute to him a share in the guilt of Tyler's atrocities, is accordingly an event in no way mysterious. If, however, there be certainty in history, it is beyond doubt that the lessons of inspiration which formed in the rector of Lutterworth so determined a foe of the great anti-christian apostacy, were also an authority to which he bowed with sacred submission when describing the legitimate claims of the magistrate, or the just pretensions of the christian pastor. It would not be difficult, indeed, to cite from his manuscripts the most fearless reproofs of prevalent abuses; but no industry of his opponents has yet been sufficient to convict him of lending his sanction to violence, as the means of redressing any existing grievance, whether relating to the church or the state. This subject will again claim our attention; but before

dismissing it here, the recorded judgment of the better informed, and the less prejudiced portion of Wycliffe's contemporaries as to the real cause of the tumult described, is deserving of notice.

Their real cause, according to Walsingham.

Even the pages of Walsingham afford a complete vindication of our reformer on this point, as in the opinion of that historian, the insurrection arose from the general depravity of the people; and it is farther stated by him as a part of the confession made by a leader of the rebels, that their meditated destruction of the hierarchy was to make way for the sole establishment of the mendicants. Had the "poor priests" adhering to Wycliffe, been thus singled out, however unjustly, it is needless to remark the matter of triumph which would have been thus afforded to the orthodox; and from this circumstance it is equally obvious, that had the wild scheme of the insurgents been realized, the rector of Lutterworth would have been just the last man in the kingdom to have viewed it with pleasure.[49]

And the statement of the parliament.

But while the monk of St. Albans saw these disorders as the chastisement of national crime, the members of the commons' house of parliament

[49] It is affirmed by Froissart that full two-thirds of the people knew not why they had assembled, and that the plunder of the opulent was shown by their conduct to be the principal motive to revolt. Hence Mr. Lewis observes that archbishop Parker's remark seems very true, that "it is owing to pure hatred of the Wycliffites, that some have falsely and "ignorantly pretended that John Balle was one of them." Lewis, cx. 227, 228. Catholic writers have been for some time aware that it is useless to speak of Ball as the disciple of Wycliffe, and they have accordingly agreed to invert the relation;—for either will do, inasmuch as to have been the tutor of Ball was to be the parent of sedition, and to be his follower was to be the mere ape of a demagogue. Ball's disorderly conduct had attracted the notice of his superiors before the year 1366. Wilkins. iii. 64. 152.

CHAP. II.

viewed them as being especially provoked by the burdens which a prodigal court had demanded in the preceding session. In their address to the king, they do not hesitate, after mature deliberation, to affirm, "that unless the administration of "the kingdom be speedily reformed, it must be- "come wholly lost. For true it is," they proceed, "that there are such defects in the said adminis- "tration, as well about the king's person, and his "household, as in his courts of justice, and by "grievous oppressions in the country, through "maintainers of suits, who are as it were kings in "the country; that right and law are come to "nothing, and the poor commons are from time "to time so pillaged and ruined, partly by the "king's purveyors of the household, and others "who pay nothing for what they take, partly by "the subsidies and tallages raised upon them, "and besides by the oppressive behaviour of the "king's servants, and other lords, and especially "of the foresaid maintainers of suits, they are "reduced to greater poverty and discomfort than "ever they were before. And moreover, though "great sums have been continually granted by, "and levied upon them for the defence of the "kingdom, yet they are not the better defended "against their enemies, but every year are plun- "dered and wasted by sea and land without any "relief. Which calamities the said poor com- "mons, who lately used to live in honor and "prosperity, can no longer endure." From this statement of grievances it appears, that in proportion to the largeness of the grants which had been made to the government, had been the diminution

of the protection promised; and that while the enemy without was suffered to menace the shores of the kingdom, the host of tyrants harboured within, were employed in daily consuming the sources of its strength. Having advanced thus far, these sturdy commoners immediately add; "and to speak the real truth, these injuries, lately "done to the poorer commons more than they "ever suffered before, caused them to rise and to "commit the mischief done in the late riot; and "there is still cause to fear greater evils, if sufficient remedy be not timely provided against the "outrages and oppressions aforesaid."[50] The lords appear to have been satisfied of the truth of these statements no less than the commons, and their testimony must be considered decisive with respect to the origin of this ill-fated resistance of arbitrary power.

[50] Hallam, iii. 93.

CHAPTER III.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION——OPPOSED BY BERENGARIUS——AND BY THE VAUDOIS AND ALBIGENSES——NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH——DEFENDED BY LANFRANC, AND ESPOUSED BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN CLERGY——WYCLIFFE'S OPPOSITION TO IT——SEVERE PENALTIES DENOUNCED ON ALL WHO SHOULD FAVOR HIS OPINIONS CONCERNING IT——HIS APPEAL TO THE CIVIL POWER FOR PROTECTION——HIS FEELING UNDER THESE PERSECUTIONS——ANALYSIS OF HIS "WICKET"——PROCEEDINGS OF COURTNEY, AND THE SYNOD AT THE GREY FRIARS——WYCLIFFE FAVORED BY THE UNIVERSITY——STATE OF PARTIES IN THE NATION UNFRIENDLY TO THE EFFORTS OF THE REFORMERS——INQUISITORIAL STATUTE OBTAINED BY THE CLERGY——NOTICE OF ROBERT RIGGE, DR. HEREFORD, REPPINGTON, ASHTON, AND OTHERS.

CHAP. III.

Transubstantiation.

It has appeared, that until the middle of the ninth century, the manner in which the body and the blood of Christ are present in the eucharist, was the subject of debate, or rather of a peaceful difference of sentiment among persons holding the chief dignities of the hierarchy. The same may be said of a considerable interval afterwards. But from that period, and from causes which have also been explained,[1] the advocates of the mysterious dogma, which in the twelfth century, began to be designated transubstantiation, rapidly increased. Its progress, however, was far from being uninterrupted; and among its opponents, the most distinguished place must be allotted to Berengarus, a gallic prelate, who about the middle of the eleventh century brought his genius

Opposed by Berengarus.

[1] Prelim. View, c. i. sect. 3.

and learning, which were both greatly above the character of the age, to an investigation of its claims. His doctrine was strictly that of the primitive church, and of the existing protestant communities. The zeal and ability with which it was supported, diffused his name through Europe, and attracted the enmity or admiration of the whole western clergy. In the cause of his opinions, the disputant patiently submitted to the spiritual censures of the pontiff, and of a council assembled at Paris; and the displeasure of his sovereign, which the same peculiarities had provoked, was followed by the forfeiture of his episcopal revenues. The burden of such evils, indeed, would be considerably lightened by remembering that his disciples in France and Italy, in England, and particularly in the states of Germany, were numerous and increasing. But such it appears was the extent of the suffering, which this advocate of truth and reason was prepared to endure in defence of his tenets. Thrice was he compelled to appear at Rome, and as often was his doctrine formally renounced but to be again avowed, as the prospect of impunity returned. Toward the close of life, he retired from the agitated scenes which for more than thirty years had been familiar to him: and the remembrance of the indecision, which had been allowed to sully his character, is said to have embittered his seclusion. But he died with the reputation of sanctity, and his followers never became extinct.[2]

[2] Mosheim, ii. 558—569, where this subject is fully and luminously treated.

CHAP. III.

And by the Vaudois and Albigenses.

The Vaudois and Albigenses, who had never embraced the marvellous theory adverted to, were invigorated in their opposition to it by the labours of Berengarus and of his partisans. That they had adopted the heresy of that prelate, was often urged as their reproach; and it is evident from certain fragments of their reasoning on this subject which their enemies have preserved, that, had the assertion been correct, the disciple must have been frequently acknowledged as by no means unworthy of his master. From the pages of an adversary, we learn that they were accustomed to appeal to the Apostle's Creed, and to that of Nice, and Athanasius, as including every important article of christian doctrine; expressing their surprise that in these summaries of truth, no reference should be made to the matter of transubstantiation, though a doctrine so greatly needing the aid of external evidence to counteract in some degree its intrinsic and surpassing difficulties. These perplexities also, the same fraternities are described as exposing with a severity of criticism, which must often have bewildered their antagonists; urging with fluency almost every question tending to involve the subject in mystery, contradiction, or absurdity.[3]

[3] See Prelim. View. c. i. sec. 2. The celebrated schoolman Alanus Magnus, thus describes the manner in which these contemporary heretics opposed this dogma of the church. "If the bread every day should be "changed into the body of Christ, it would be infinitely increased. They "enquire also whether the bread ceaseth to be; and if it ceaseth to be "then it is annihilated, and so it is spoiled: Also they ask, how a body "of so great a bulk can enter into the mouth of a man? Whether the "body of Christ be eaten, chewed with the teeth, and consequently

CHAP. III.

Not recognized by the Anglo-saxon church.

But we are principally concerned to know the fate of this doctrine in England. Our Saxon ancestors were in general sufficiently obedient to the opinions and customs of the papacy, and we may believe that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not unknown, nor wholly unapproved, by their spiritual guides. We have, however, the most decisive proof that the dogma so named, formed no part of the national creed in the tenth century. Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and the correspondent and associate of the principal ecclesiastics of that period, has adverted in one of his epistles to the elements of the eucharist

---

"divided into parts? Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ, "because then it will really be the body of Christ—that is to say, some-"thing else than it is? Whether the bread becomes the body of "Christ; because if so, then bread will be the matter of Christ's body. "Also after transubstantiation, the accidents remain; if so they must "be in another subject—as for instance, in the air. But if it be there, "then some part of the air must be round, and savory, and white; "and as this form is carried through divers places, so the accidents "change their subject. Again, these accidents abide in the same part "of the air, and so solidity will be in the air; because they are solid, "and consequently the air will be solid. Hence it appears that these "accidents are not in the air, neither are they in the body of Christ, "neither can any other body be assigned in its place in which they "shall appear to be, and therefore the accidents do not merely seem "to remain. Again, when the form or figure in which the body of Christ "lieth, and is divided into parts, the body of Christ continues no longer "in that figure which it had before—how, therefore, can the body of "Christ be in every part of that host. Again, if the body of Christ be "hid in that little form, where is the head, and where the foot?—as a con-"sequence his members must be undistinguishable. Again, Christ gave "his body to his disciples before his passion. Now he gave it them "either mortal or immortal, yet if he gave it immortal, it is certain "that then it was mortal, and consequently while it is really mortal it "was yet immortal, which is impossible." Alanus contra Albigenses, &c. c. 50. cited in the latin from Alanus, by Dr. Allix, in his remarks on the churches of the Albigenses, c. xvi. 146. The above are a few only of the queries with which the heretics were accustomed to perplex the faith of the orthodox.

CHAP. III.

in a manner which incidentally, but most distinctly, proscribes the doctrine of a "real pre-"sence." This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York, and as its translation into the vernacular language was in compliance with the request of that prelate, it must be admitted as a document of no mean authority.[4] According to this writer, the "housel is Christ's body, "not bodily but spiritually. Not the body "which he suffered in, but the body of which he "spake when he blessed bread and wine, a night "before his sufferings." "The apostle," he observes, "has said of the Hebrews, that they all did "eat the same ghostly meat, and they all did drink "the same ghostly drink. And this he said, not "bodily but ghostly, Christ being not yet born, "nor his blood shed when that the people of "Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone. "And the stone was not bodily, though he so said. "It was the same mystery in the old law, and "they did ghostly signify that ghostly 'housel' of "our Saviour's body which we consecrate now." In his homily, "appointed in the reign of the "Saxons to be spoken unto the people at Easter," the doctrine of Elfric, and of the Anglo-saxon clergy in relation to this service, is more fully exhibited. He there repeats his allusion to the manna, and the rock of the wilderness, and speaks

[4] The work from which I quote has the following title page, "A Testi-"monie of Antiquitie, showing the auncient fayth in the church of En-"gland, touching the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, "here publicly preached, and also received in the Saxon tyme above "600 years ago. Printed by John Day, beneath St. Martyns, Cum "Privilegio Regiæ Maiestatio." 1567.

of the bread in the christian sacrament as being the body of Christ, but as the waters of baptism may be said to be the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In describing the difference between the body Christ suffered in, and the body that is hallowed to "housel," he states that the one was born of the flesh of Mary, and that the other is gathered of many corns, and that "nothing therefore is to be "understood therein bodily, but all is ghostly to "be understood." The bread which is farther described, as having bodily shape, is again contrasted with the body of Christ, which is said to be present, but in its "ghostly might." The body also in which Christ rose from the dead never dieth, but the consecrated bread is declared to be temporal, not eternal. The latter is divided into parts, and some receive a larger portion, and some a less; but the body of Christ "after ghostly mystery" is undivided, and equally in all. This series of distinctions the writer concludes by observing, that the things appealing to the senses in the eucharist, are a pledge and figure, while Christ's body is truth itself.

The authenticity of this production is beyond suspicion, and that the printed copy is correctly given from the original is attested by archbishop Parker, by his brother of York, and by the suffragans of both.

Defended by Lanfranc.

But though it is thus certain that the mystery of transubstantiation was not among the recognised doctrines of the Anglo-saxon hierarchy, its general adoption was to be among the immediate results of the conquest. By the transfer of the english sceptre to the hand of a Norman,

CHAP. III.

Espoused by the Anglo-norman clergy.

the political ascendency of the pontiffs in relation to this island, was for awhile indeed materially broken or impeded. But Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury, under the first William, was the most distinguished opponent of Berengarius; and from that period to the age of Wycliffe, the faith of the real presence was inculcated by the native clergy without opposition.[5]

In attempting the overthrow of this doctrine, our reformer must have been aware of the danger and the suffering which would be found attendant on the effort. And we must presume that evils so certain, and serious would hardly have been encountered, had not the error to be assailed appeared to him as fraught with impiety and abuses of the most revolting description. Of the steps which led him so to regard it, and which determined his hostile movements relating to it, we are but partially informed. It is, however, by no means, surprising, that a study of the scriptures, which had been devoutly pursued through so long an interval, and which had produced a renunciation of so many established opinions, should issue in the abandonment of a doctrine, containing the grossest of the insults, which priests in their insolence of triumph had bestowed on the prostrate capacities of their victims. Of the spirit with which Wycliffe addressed himself to this contest, we may judge from the following extract which forms the introduction to one of his most popular pieces on the subject. "Forasmuch as our Saviour, Jesus Christ, with the

[5] Mosheim, ii. 560.

" prophets who were before him, and the apostles " who were presently with him, whom he also left " after him, and whose hearts were mollified by " the Holy Ghost—have warned us, and given us " knowledge that there are two manners of ways, " the one to life, the other to death—therefore pray " we heartily to God, that he, of his mere mercy, " will so strengthen us with the grace and stedfast- " ness of his Holy Spirit, as to make us strong in " spiritual living according to the gospel, that so " the world—no not the very infidels, papists, nor " apostates, may gather any occasion to speak " evil of us; that we may enter into that strait " gate as Christ our Saviour, and all that follow " him have done, not in idle living, but in diligent " labouring—yea in great sufferance of persecu- " tion even to the death."[6]

It was with sentiments thus devout and thus fixed, that Wycliffe commenced his attack on the received doctrine concerning the eucharist. The weakness and the contradictions inseparable from that tenet, would have been of themselves sufficient to justify a zealous opposition; but in the view of the reformer, the sin of the officiating priest was less the result of inattention than of impiety, and such as rendered him a false guide to the community, conducting his followers into the snares of a ruinous idolatry. The doctrine promulgated by Wycliffe on this point, is of such frequent occurrence in the course of his sermons, as to render it

[6] MS. Octiolum Wiclevi. This piece was printed at Norenberch, in 1546, under the title of Wycliffe's Wicket.

CHAP. III.

nearly certain that it had been often broached from the pulpit, prior to its admission into his lectures at Oxford. In these, however, a studious prominence was assigned to it in the spring of 1381.[7] Twelve conclusions were then published, in which he challenged the attention of the members of the university to his exposition of this sacrament.[8] In these, while admitting that the words of consecration conferred a peculiar, and even a mysterious dignity on the bread and wine, it was most distinctly stated that they were not to be considered, "as Christ, or as any part of him," but "as an effectual sign of him." To the easy faith of the majority in that age, few things in religion could occur as difficult if sanctioned by the church. With others, it was a matter of strange perplexity, that the sensible qualities which had distinguished the bread of the eucharist previous to its consecration, should continue to all human perception precisely unaltered after that mystic ceremony had been performed. To counteract this inconvenient verdict of the senses the genius of the mendicants struck out a new path in logical science, affirming that an accident, or the property of an object, as its whiteness, or its roundness, may be supposed to exist, even when the object itself had ceased to be. The discernment of Wycliffe was so deeply offended by this shameless subterfuge, that his writings from this period abound with allusions to it; nor does he hesitate to denounce it as an absurdity betraying a

[7] Wood, 188. Lewis, c. vi. [8] Appendix, No. 2.

fraudulence of temper, demonstrating the new orders to be wholly unworthy of the public confidence. In the conclusions now published, this favorite dogma of his old antagonists was especially condemned.

It will not be supposed, that a tenet which artifice had rendered so subservient to the interests of the priesthood, was thus assailed without exciting the most serious opposition. It appears also that a larger portion of the honors of the university at this period were possessed by the religious orders, notwithstanding the various attempts to reduce their influence. The chancellor, William de Berton,—whether awed by their power or truly alarmed by the intrepidity of Wycliffe, became a party to measures which were speedily adopted with a view to prevent the diffusion of the new doctrine. In a convention of twelve doctors, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants, the reformer was represented as teaching that, in the sacrament of the altar, the substance of material bread and wine, remained without change after the words of consecration were pronounced; and that in the same venerable sacrament, there is the body and blood of Christ, not esssentially, nor substantially, nor even bodily, but figuratively or tropically; so that Christ is not there truly, or verily in his own bodily presence. To pass a sentence of reprobation, on opinions which so completely destroyed the mystery of transubstantiation, would be the ready determination of such an assembly. It was accordingly agreed to describe these novelties as erroneous, as opposed to the decisions of the church, and to state it as the true

Condemnation of the doctrine of Wycliffe.

CHAP. III.

doctrine of the eucharist, "that by the sacramental "words duly pronounced by the priest, the bread "and wine upon the altar are transubstantiated, or "substantially converted into the true body and "blood of Christ—so that after consecration there "is not in that venerable sacrament the material "bread and wine which before existed, considered "in their own substances or natures, but only the "species of the same, under which are contained "the true body of Christ, and his blood, not figu-"ratively, nor tropically, but essentially, substan-"tially, and corporally; so that Christ is verily there "in his own proper bodily presence." To protect these dogmas from the process of investigation with which they were now threatened, it was resolved that the sentence of the greater excommunication, suspension from all scholastic exercises, and the forfeiture of personal liberty, should be incurred by any member of the University, who either in the schools or out of them, should inculcate the opinions published by the rector of Lutterworth. The same penalties were also adjudged, to such as should be convicted of listening to any defence of "the two aforesaid erroneous assertions."[9]

The meeting in which these resolutions were adopted appears to have been privately convened. Wycliffe was in the school of the Augustinians, seated in his chair as professor, and lecturing amidst his pupils on the matter of the eucharist,

[9] See Appendix, No. 3. Leland. de Script. Brit. 379. Sir R. Twisden refers to the above censures, in support of this doctrine, as "the first ple-"nary determination of the church of England" respecting it; and ac-cordingly concludes that "the opinion of transubstantiation, that brought "so many to the stake, had not more than a hundred and forty years' "prescription before Martin Luther." Historical Vindication, 193, 194.

CHAP. III.

when a messenger entered the apartment, and in the name of the chancellor and of the divines his coadjutors, pronounced the above sentence relating to the sacrament of the altar, and such as should favour the recent heresies on that subject. The reformer paused, as if taken by surprise, and in doubt as to the best mode of resisting the hostility which had so suddenly assumed this formidable shape. But a moment was sufficient to restore his confidence;—he then arose, and by challenging the collected strength of his opponents to a fair refutation of his published opinions, exposed the brute force from which they now sought the protection of their doctrine as worthy of the cause in which it was employed. He had often declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to protect the life, the property, and in all such cases as the present, the personal freedom of the subject. On this maxim he was now resolved to act with a firmness not inferior to that of his adversaries. The alternative placed before him, was silence or imprisonment; and the chancellor was therefore informed that if the question must be one of force, and not of reason, he should appeal from the decision of his ordinary to the equity of the civil power.[10]

His appeal to the civil power.

A considerable interval, however, was to elapse before the meeting of the next parliament, and we may suppose that during that period the lectures of the reformer, as divinity professor, were devoted to topics less dangerous to his personal liberty. The prohibition of the chancellor, however, would be limited to the sphere of his particular jurisdic-

[10] Sudbury's Register in Wilkins. iii. 170, 171.

CHAP. III.

tion, and it is to be observed that even within the University, it referred but to oral communication. Wycliffe's province, as rector of Lutterworth, was still open, and the partial silence imposed on his lips, would naturally impart an additional industry to his pen. His piece intitled, The Wicket, was composed during this crisis, and before proceeding to the discussion which it was intended to embrace, the writer feelingly adverts to the treatment which he had recently experienced from "clerks "of the law." "These," he observes, "have "ever been against God the Lord, both in the old "law, and in the new; slaying the prophets which "spake to them the words of God. Yea, they "spared not the Son of God, when the temporal "judge would have delivered him. And so forth "of the apostles and martyrs who have spoken "truly of the word of God." Thus, as the chief foes of truth, instead of occupying the foreground in its defence, they are said to have denounced it as "heresy to speak of the holy scriptures in english;" and the same cause is said to have produced "the "law which they have made on the sacred host." In the latter, "the falsest belief" is declared to be inculcated, and of those who bow to its authority, worshipping the consecrated bread, it is enquired, "Where find you that ever Christ, or any "of his apostles worshipped it?" Appealing to the ancient creeds which assert the eternity and immutability of the Saviour's existence, he demands with solemnity, "may the thing made, "turn again, and make him who made it? Thou "then, that art an earthly man, by what reason "mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker?"

Analysis of his Wicket.

Leaving this difficulty to be solved by the wisdom of orthodoxy, he next enquires, whether the body understood to be made by the priest at the altar, must be considered as that of the Redeemer, previous or subsequent to his resurrection. If it be said to be the spiritual body in which he ascended to the Father, that according to the scriptures, "the heavens must receive until the "restitution of all things." If it be the body of Christ, previous to his dissolution, then is it one which has yet to die, since the scriptures which speak of his incarnation, speak no less distinctly of his agony and death. From this dilemma, the reformer proceeds to object to the received interpretation of the words, "This is my body." These he contends, are improperly regarded as being at all the words of consecration, since it is evident, from the mode of their introduction in the gospel, that they related simply to the act of distribution. "Seek ye busily," he writes, "if ye can find two words of blessing or giving "of thanks wherewith Christ made his body and "blood of the bread and wine. For if ye might "once find out those words then should ye wax "great masters above Christ, and then ye might "be givers of his substance, and as fathers, and "makers of him, he should worship you as it is "written, Thou shalt worship thy father and thy "mother. Of such as desire such worship against "the law of God, speaks St. Paul, when writing "of the man of sin, that advanceth himself as he "were God. Whether our clergy be guilty of "this, judge ye, or they who know most." The conclusion resulting from this doctrine, he

CHAP. III.

CHAP. III.

remarks is, "that the thing which is not God "to-day shall be God to-morrow — yea, that "the thing which is without spirit of life, but "groweth in the field by nature, shall another "time be God! and still we ought to believe, "that God is without beginning and without "ending!" The men who could be insensible to these impossibilities, or perceiving them, were so impious as to affect a credence of the doctrine which involved them, are reminded of the Mosaic narrative of the creation, and are required to imitate that achievement of Deity, before they pretend to give existence to his attributes. "If "ye cannot make the works which he made, "how," it is demanded, "shall ye make Him who "made them?" To avoid the difficulty which arose from teaching that each portion of the sacramental bread became the undivided body of Christ, it was usual to remark, that though a glass should be broken into a multitude of pieces, yet each fragment retained the power of reflecting the same countenance. But this unfortunate exercise of ingenuity is noticed by the reformer as favorable to his doctrine, and at variance with that of his opponents, since in every such fragment, "it is not the very face, but the figure "thereof" which is perceptible, "and just so," it is observed, "the bread is the figure of Christ's "body." And as the Redeemer meant not a material cup when that term was employed by him in the agony of the garden, and in his previous address to the sons of Zebedee, it is affirmed to be reasonable that we attach a figurative meaning to certain of his expressions which

occur in connexion with the last supper. With the following paragraphs the work concludes. CHAP. III.

" Therefore let every man wisely, with meek
" prayers, and great study, and also with charity,
" read the words of God, and holy scriptures.
" But many of you are like the mother of Zebedee's
" children, to whom Christ said, thou wottest not
" what thou askest. You wot not what ye ask,
" nor what ye do. For if ye did, ye would not
" blaspheme God as ye do, setting an alien god,
" instead of the living God. Christ saith, I am
" a very vine. Wherefore worship ye not the
" vine for God, as ye do the bread? Wherein was
" Christ a very vine? or wherein was the bread
" Christ's body? It was in figurative speech,
" which is hidden to the understanding of sinners.
" And thus, as Christ became not a material nor
" an earthly vine, nor a material vine the body of
" Christ, so neither is material bread changed
" from its substance to the flesh and blood of
" Christ. Have you not read that when Christ
" came into the temple, they asked of him what
" token he would give that they might believe him,
" and he answered 'Cast down this temple, and
" in three days I will raise it again,' which words
" were fulfilled in his rising from the dead. But
" when he said, 'Undo this temple,' in that he
" meant thus, they were deceived, for they under-
" stood it fleshly, and thought that he had spoken
" of the temple at Jerusalem, because he stood in
" it. And therefore, at his passion, they accused
" him full falsely, for he spake of the temple of
" his blessed body, which rose again on the third
" day. And just so Christ spake of his holy body,

CHAP. III.

" when he said, ' This is my body which shall be
" given for you,' which was given to death, and
" unto rising again to bliss for all that shall be
" saved by him. But just as they falsely ac-
" cused him respecting the temple of Jerusalem,
" so, now-a-days, they accuse falsely against
" Christ, and say that he spake of the bread which
" he brake among his apostles. For in that
" Christ said this figuratively they are deceived,
" taking it fleshly and turn it to the material
" bread, as the jews did in the matter of the
" temple. And on this foul misunderstanding
" they make the abomination of discomfort, which
" is spoken of by the prophet Daniel, as standing
" in the holy place.—He that readeth, let him
" understand. Now, therefore, pray we heartily
" to God, that this evil time may be made short
" for the sake of the chosen men, as he hath
" promised in his holy gospel, and that the large
" and broad way that leadeth to perdition, may
" be stopped, and that the strait and narrow way
" that leadeth to bliss may be made open by the
" holy scriptures, that we may know what is
" the will of God, to serve him with certainty
" and holiness, and in fear, that we may find by
" him the way of bliss everlasting." Such was the doctrine of Wycliffe, in relation to the eucharist. As the person who is raised to prelatical or princely dignity is still a man, so it was affirmed, the bread, exalted as it may be from the purposes to which it is applied in the sacrament of the altar, is in every property what it previously was; and the doctrine of transubstantiation is accordingly treated as the strange result of

attaching a literal import to metaphorical expressions.[11] CHAP. III.

It will be in the recollection of the reader, that the summer of 1381, became memorable from the insurrection of the commons,[12] and that Wycliffe's public opposition to the tenet now adverted to, commenced about the same period. On the 14th of June, the see of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Simon Sudbury; and in the October following, it was filled by Courtney, previously bishop of London. The translation of this prelate had been secured by a bull of Urban the sixth, and the obligation thus conferred on the new primate by his ecclesiastical sovereign, induced the most scrupulous submission to every claim of the papacy. Until the pall, which custom had rendered the badge of his present dignity, was procured from Rome, the jurisdiction of his see and its usual insignia were declined. But this ornament obtained, the archipiescopal staff was assumed; and the ecclesiastic, who, as bishop of the capital, had shewn the most zealous opposition to the opinions of our reformer, avowed his determination to employ the whole of his more extended influence to complete their extirpation.[13]

Early in May, "this pillar of the church," as he was described by the orthodox, deemed himself canonically invested with the primacy, and two days subsequent a parliament was convened at Westminster. The mandates of the archbishop were imme- Proceedings of Courtney.

[11] Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 4. 7.

[12] From the proclamation in Rymer, vii. 311. it appears that the storm began to lower early in the spring.

[13] Wake's State of the Church, 313.

CHAP. III.

diately issued, calling a synod to deliberate as to the decisions proper to be adopted with regard to certain strange and dangerous opinions said to be widely diffused "as well among the no-"bility as the commons of this realm of England." On the seventeenth of the same month, an assembly was accordingly convened, including eight prelates, fourteen doctors of the civil and of the canon law, six bachelors of divinity, fifteen mendicants, and four monks. A residence of the grey friars in the metropolis, was the place of meeting; and the policy of the archbishop appears to have been to procure a formal condemnation of the obnoxious tenets, and then to commence an unsparing prosecution of such as should hesitate to renounce them. Nor was this mode of procedure more vigorously chosen than pursued. It happened, however, that the synod had scarcely approached the matters to be adjusted by its wisdom, when the city was shaken by an earthquake, and the confidence of the parties assembled was so far disturbed by the occurrence, as to threaten the abandonment of the object before them, as probably at variance with the will of Heaven. But the ready genius of the primate who presided, conferred a different meaning on the event, comparing the dispersion of noxious vapours produced by such convulsions with the purity which should be secured to the church, as the result of the present struggle to remove the pestilent from her communion. The courage of the wavering being thus restored, twenty-four conclusions were read as those which had been preached, "generally, commonly, and publicly,

Synod at the Grey Friars.

" —— through the province of Canterbury, and " the realm of England." After the " good delibe- " ration" of three days, it was agreed, that ten of these conclusions were heretical, and the remaining were declared to be erroneous.

The statements condemned as heretical related to the sacrament of the altar as including no change in the substance of the bread and wine—to priests and bishops as forfeiting their power as such, by yielding to deadly sin—to auricular confession as unnecessary—to clerical endowments as unlawful —and to the claims of a depraved pontiff as derivable, perhaps, from the emperor, but in no instance from the gospel. In the propositions described as erroneous, the accused are made to say, that a prelate excommunicating any man without knowing him to be so judged of God, is himself a heretic, and excommunicated—that to prohibit appeals from the tribunal of the clergy to that of the king, is to incur the guilt of treason —that priests and deacons are all empowered to preach the gospel without waiting for the sanction of popes or of prelates—that to forego this service from the fear of clerical censures, must be to appear a traitor to God in the day of doom—that temporal lords may deprive an offending clergy of their possessions—that tythes are merely alms to be yielded to the clergy but as they are devout men, and according to the discretion of the contributors—and finally, that the institutions of the religious are in themselves sinful, and tend in many ways to the injury of piety.[14]

[14] Wilkins, iii. 157. Lewis. c. vi. The Godstow chronicle, cited by Mr. Lewis, states that the earthquake noticed in the preceding page

CHAP. III.

Progress of persecution.

That some of these doctrines were correctly attributed to the avowed disciples of Wycliffe, will not be disputed, but others appear to have derived a part of their complexion from the prejudice of adversaries. The pomp, however, of that authority which had condemned the whole, is frequently appealed to in vindication of the tyranny which now accompanied the effort to suppress them. Courtney was fully aware, that the university, which had so long been the residence of our reformer, was scarcely more fertile of heresy than the metropolis of the kingdom. A letter was accordingly addressed to the bishop of London, in which, having announced himself as metropolitan of all England, and legate of the apostolic see, the archbishop laments, that in contempt of certain canons which had wisely restricted the office of preaching, whether publicly or privately, to such as are sanctioned by the holy see, or by their prelates, many were every where found teaching doctrines subversive of the whole church, "infecting many well-meaning "christians, and causing them to wander grie-"vously from the catholic communion, without "which there is no salvation." The bishop is then reminded of the high authority by which the propositions preferred to had been declared heretical and false; and he is, in conclusion, exhorted in common with all his brethren suffragans of Canterbury, "To admonish and warn that no

took place about one o'clock in the forenoon of the Wednesday previous to Whitsuntide, which was May 30th. (c. vi. 106.) This was probably a second convulsion, for the meeting of the synod appears to have been nearly a fortnight earlier.

" man do henceforth hold, preach, or defend the " foresaid heresies and errors, or any of them." To secure this object it is required, that neither himself, nor his brethren in the prelacy, do admit any suspected persons to the liberty of preaching —that they listen not to the abettors of the above pernicious tenets—that they lean not to them, either publicly or privately, but rather shun them as serpents who diffuse pestilence and poison— and that this be done on pain of the greater excommunication, the sentence to be denounced on all and every one who shall be found in these things disobedient.[15] CHAP. III.

That the greater publicity might be given to this crusade against heresy, it was arranged, that during the ensuing Whitsuntide, a religious procession should pass through the streets of London; and on the appointed day, the attention of the populace was arrested by numbers of the clergy and laity moving bare-footed towards St. Paul's; where a carmelite friar ascended the pulpit, and informed the mourning multitude of their duty at this foreboding crisis, with regard to the church and her enemies. But it has appeared that the commands of the archbishop, which doubtless produced this edifying spectacle, were not only addressed to the bishop of the metropolis, but to the whole of the prelates, suffragans to the chair of Augustine. A copy of the primate's letter was accordingly conveyed to Wycliffe's diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln; and to secure a speedy and certain execution of its instructions, official docu-

[15] Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 569. Knighton, 2650, 2651.

CHAP. III.

ments were immediately addressed by this prelate to the abbots and priors, and the different officers, even to the rectors, vicars, and parochial chaplains, throughout the district to which the church of Lutterworth pertained. It is described, as in the deanery of Goodlaxton, in the archdeaconry of Leicester. And it will be presumed, that, while the whole of the clergy around him, were thus canonically admonished of their obligations in relation to the heresy of the times, the reformer himself would not fail to receive his share of the salutary warning. There were causes, however, by which the proceedings meditated against him were for awhile delayed.[16]

With these attempts to diffuse a spirit of persecution through the provinces by the agency of the prelates, similar efforts with respect to the seats of learning would be of course associated. At this period, Peter Stokes, a carmelite, and a doctor of divinity, had distinguished himself during his residence in Oxford, by the ardour with which he had opposed the new opinions. His conduct in this particular procured him the notice and the patronage of the archbishop, who in a letter, dated a week subsequent to the meeting at the Grey Friars, enjoins it upon the zealous mendicant to publish the decisions of that assembly through the university. In this document, which is nearly a transcript of that sent to the bishops, the primate adverts to the contempt of all episcopal sanctions observable in the conduct of the new preachers; to their doctrine as subversive of the

[16] Ibid. 2650. Fox, Acts and Monuments, ubi supra. Lewis.

faith in which alone there is salvation; and to the high authority of the synod by which their novelties had been condemned; and proceeding to inculcate, that to refuse the needful aid for saving men from destruction, is to become chargeable with their blood, he enjoins that the persons maintaining the heresies and errors specified, be holden in the strictest abhorrence, under the penalty of the great anathema.[17] CHAP. III.

Wycliffe favored by the university

It was of little avail, however, to dispatch such instructions to the university, while its chancellor and so large a portion of its members were the secret, if not the open adherents of the persecuted. That office, which in the preceding year had been sustained by William de Berton, was now filled by Robert Rigge,—a scholar who exposed himself to much inconvenience and suffering from his attachment to certain of the reformer's opinions. In the records of this period, the name of Dr. Nicholas Hereford, is also of frequent occurrence as that of a principal follower of Wycliffe. Before the assembling of the late synod, this divine, to use the language of the primate, had been "vehemently suspected of heresy." At this moment, however, and while the inquisitorial purposes of the archbishop were sufficiently known, Hereford is called by the chancellor to preach before the university; and the service which thus devolved upon him, was deemed the most honorable of its class through the year. A similar mark of approbation it appears was conferred at about the same period on

[17] See Appendix, No. 4.

CHAP. III.

Ralph Rippington, who was also doctor of divinity, and equally an admirer of Wycliffe; and the discourses of both are described as containing a passionate eulogy on the character and the general doctrine of the rector of Lutterworth. But this exercise of the chancellor's authority was instantly reported to the archbishop, and an expostulatory letter was suddenly dispatched, advising a more appropriate employment of his influence. It required him indeed to loathe the opinions and the intercourse "of these presumptuous men," and as he would not himself be suspected of heretical pravity to afford immediate aid to Peter Stokes, that the letters possessed by him might be duly published, and that the reign of a sect against which the king and the lords had promised to unite their authority might at length be brought to its close.[16]

Circumstances at this moment unfriendly to the efforts of the reformers.

The statement of the primate, as to the intentions of the court, was not without foundation. Richard was now in the sixteenth year of his age, and we have seen the failure of those martial preparations, which engaged the attention of his government during the earlier period of his reign, involve his exchequer in the most serious difficulties. We have also seen the efforts of his ministers to extricate the vessel of the state, as serving but to increase its perils, until an insurrection and such as had been hitherto unknown in our history, threatened the extinction of every privileged order in the community. The zeal and ingenuity of such churchmen as the present archbishop of

[16] Fox. Acts, &c.

Canterbury, would not be slow in suggesting to the young monarch that the convulsions which had recently shaken the kingdom, must be expected to return; and that their object in some evil hour must be achieved, should the present rector of Lutterworth, and his numerous disciples be allowed to continue their unfettered appeal to the passions of the populace. Under the known disaffection of the commons, it became also a point of peculiar moment to propitiate the clergy. Their wealth might enable the government, to soften the rigours of that system of taxation, which had recently goaded the people into madness. Lancaster too, who during the late commotions, had been employed in treating with the Scots on the border, had shared much in the resentment of the insurgents; and from some other causes, was far from being acceptable to the existing ministry. Thus favorable was the crisis, to a nearer alliance between the mitre and the crown. Nor should it be forgotten, that the family of the ecclesiastic now raised to the primacy of the english church, was possessed of considerable influence among the members of the secular aristocracy.[19] A few months only had passed, since the blood of the commons had been freely shed, as the price of their transient ascendency; and though the king proceeded so far as to submit to his next parliament, the propriety of wholly abolishing the service of villanage; and the house

CHAP. III.

[19] Barne's Edward the Third, 904. He was fourth son of Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, by Margaret, daughter of Humphry Bohun, earl of Hereford and Essex, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Edward the first. Lewis, c. iv. 58.

CHAP. III.

of commons declared the late insurrection, to be the sole result of delinquencies in the executive government; almost the only immediate consequence of the disorder appears to have been, to supply the tyrannical with materials to enforce the usual pleas for deeds of oppression.

It is at this favorable moment that the english clergy unite in preferring to their sovereign and to the court, a series of complaints against the doctrine and the practices of the followers of Wycliffe. With a view also to increase the odium so industriously bestowed upon them, they were now designated lollards,[20]—a name which had long

---

[20] Fox. i. 578. There are few minor points in ecclesiastical history on which a greater diversity of opinion has prevailed, than with respect to the origin of the term lollard. The subject has received more attention from Mosheim than from any other writer known to me, and his statement is as follows. "As the clergy of this age (the fourteenth century) took little "care of the sick and dying, and deserted such as were infected with "those pestilential disorders which were then very frequent; some com- "passionate and pious persons at Antwerp, formed themselves into a "society for the performance of those religious offices which the sacer- "dotal orders so shamefully neglected. Pursuant to this agreement "they visited and comforted the sick, assisted the dying with their "prayers and exhortations, took care of the interment of those who "were cut off by the plague, and on that account forsaken by the "affrighted clergy, and committed them to the grave with a solemn "funeral dirge. It was with reference to this last office, that the common "people gave them the name of lollards. The example of these good "people had such an extensive influence, that in a little time societies of the "same sort of lollards, consisting both of men and women, were formed "in most parts of Germany and Flanders, and were supported partly "by their manual labours, and partly by the charitable donations of pious "persons." Hist. iii. 355—358. But the existence of such societies reflected on the character of the clergy, and impaired the resources of the mendicants; and hence every art was resorted to for the purpose of rendering them odious. Such too was the success of these efforts, that the name, though so reputable in its origin, came to be descriptive of all persons who were thought to conceal enormous vices under the appearances of sanctity. See a curious note from Mosheim on this subject in the Appendix, No. 5.

distinguished certain sectaries on the continent, to whom, after the custom of the times, almost every thing degrading had been imputed. The persons in England, who from this period were classed with those injured people, are described by the prelates, abbots, and friars, representing the hierarchy, as teaching—that since the time of Silvester, there has been no true pope, and that the last to whom that name should be given is the existing pontiff, Urban the sixth: that the power of granting indulgences, and of binding and loosing, as claimed by ecclesiastics, is a delusion, and that those who confide in it are in consequence accursed: that auricular confession is a superfluous service: that the bishop of Rome has no legislative authority in the christian church: that the invocation of saints is an unauthorized custom: that the worship of images or pictures is idolatry: that the miracles attributed to them are false: that the clergy are bound to reside on their benefices, and not to farm them to others, and that such as fail in these duties should be degraded as wasters of the goods of the church: and finally—that the pomp of the higher orders of the priesthood should be in all things done away, and their doctrine on the vanity of the world be enforced by example. It will not be supposed that doctrines at all of this character, could have been widely dissemminated, without deeply irritating the men to whose pretensions they were principally and so explicitly opposed.

Persecuting statute surreptitiously obtained by the clergy.

By their present appeal, the clergy obtained the sanction of the king and of certain lords, to a statute which occurs as the first in our parliamen-

CHAP. III

tary history, providing for the punishment of the variable crime designated heresy. For this reason, and as it farther discloses the energy and activity with which Wycliffe's "poor priests" pursued their plans of reform, it is here inserted without abridgement. "Forasmuch as it is openly known, "that there are divers evil persons within the "realm going from county to county, and from "town to town, in certain habits under dissimula-"tion of great holiness, and without the licence of "the ordinaries of the places or other sufficient "authority, preaching daily, not only in churches, "and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, "and other open places where a great congre-"gation of people is, divers sermons contain-"ing heresies, and notorious errors to the great "blemishing of the christian faith, and destruction "of the laws and of the estate of holy-church, to "the great peril of the souls of the people, and of "all the realm of England, (as more plainly is "found and sufficiently proved before the reve-"rend father in God, the archbishop of Canter-"bury, and the bishops and other prelates, "masters of divinity, and doctors of canon and "of civil law, and a great part of the clergy of the "same realm especially assembled for this cause,) "which persons do also preach divers matters of "slander, to engender discord and dissention be-"tween divers estates of the said realm, as well "spiritual as temporal, in exciting of the people "to the great peril of all the realm; which "preachers being cited or summoned before the "ordinaries of the places, there to answer to that "whereof they be impeached, they will not obey

"to their summons and commandments, nor "care for their monitions nor for the censures of "holy-church, but expressly despise them; and "moreover, by their subtle and ingenious words "do draw the people to hear their sermons, and "do maintain them in their errors, by strong hand "and by great routs. It is therefore ordained "and assented in this present parliament, that "the king's commissions be made and directed to "the sheriffs and other ministers of our sovereign "lord the king, or other sufficient persons learned, "and according to the certifications of the pre-"lates thereof, to be made in the chancery from "time to time, to arrest all such preachers, and "also their fautors, maintainers and abettors, and "to hold them in arrest and strong prison till "they will justify themselves according to the "law and reason of holy-church. And the king "willeth and commandeth, that the chancellor "make such commissions at all times, that he, "by the prelates, or any of them, shall be certi-"fied, and thereof required, as is aforesaid."[21]

By this statute, informal and invalid as it proved to be, much was done toward rendering the civil authorities through the kingdom, the passive instruments of that holy office which the scheme was intended to establish in every diocese. Courtney felt no delicacy in describing himself as "chief inquisitor of heretical pravity for the "province of Canterbury," and to him this arrangement would of course be peculiarly grate-

[21] This document, and those from which the remaining facts of this chapter are mostly derived, may be seen in Fox. 575—580. also in Wilkin's Concilia, iii. and in Lewis.

35932

CHAP. III.

ful. That the suspected through the nation, might be placed under immediate "arrest and "in strong prison," the force at the command of the sheriffs, was to be subject in every place, and at every season, to the bidding of the prelates; and no process instituted was to terminate, but as the parties accused should "justify themselves "according to the law and the reason of holy-"church." And if it be remembered, that our statute book had not hitherto included the remotest provision, for correcting the religious aberrations of the community, the matured form of the oppressive policy now introduced, must be viewed as bespeaking the strongest confidence on the part of the ruling clergy, in the peculiarities of the crisis, as favorable to a restoration of their past ascendancy. The facts adverted to, are also widely at issue with the deceptive theory, which transfers the odium of the atrocious persecutions so frequent in ancient Christendom to the temper of the magistrate, or to the maxims which had become incorporated with the policy of princes before the diffusion of the gospel. In the annals of our own country, it is evident that the laity were indebted to the clergy for their disposition to enforce the articles of the christian faith by the terrors of the dungeon or the stake; and it is no less certain, that the zeal which first taught them to prize the scent of blood propelled them in the chace.

The attention of the primate, on obtaining this aid from the coercive machinery of the state, was first directed to Oxford. The synod which had separated on the twenty-first of May, was convened again in the chamber of the preaching

friars on the twelfth of June; and Robert Rigge, the chancellor of the university, and William Brightwell, a doctor of divinity, appeared at the place of meeting to answer, respecting their late conduct in favor of Hereford and Rippington; and also as to their opinion concerning the "afore-"said articles." Rigge was a zealous advocate of the university, as an establishment which should be less subject to the control of the ecclesiastical than of the civil power; and hence strongly opposed to the religious orders, who were concerned to limit its jurisdiction to the authority of the primate, as legate of the apostolic see. Wycliffe had distinguished himself in the same cause; but while the chancellor certainly admired the character of our reformer, it is doubtful how far the theological opinions of the rector of Lutterworth were his own. Before the synod, indeed, he declared his assent to the judgment passed on the twenty-four articles in the previous meeting; and Brightwell, after some hesitation, was induced to follow his example. It is not improbable that as the prospect of successful resistance seemed to disappear, the courage of both was so far subdued as to admit the partial concealment of their opinions. It is certain that a letter was now delivered by the archbishop to "his well be-"loved son in Christ, the chancellor of Oxford," requiring him to publish the proscribed articles in the schools and churches at the hours of lecturing and preaching; and to give the greater efficacy to this proclamation, it was to be made in latin and in the vulgar tongue. In the document containing these instructions, the names of

CHAP. III.

CHAP. III.

John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repington, John Ashton, and Lawrence Redman, occur as those of persons notoriously suspected of heresy; and adverting to these and such as should in any way favor their persons or their doctrine, the primate writes, "we suspend the "same suspected persons from all scholastic "exercises, until such time as they shall have "purified themselves before us; and we require "that you publicly denounce the same to have "been and to be by us suspended; and that you "diligently and faithfully search after all their "patrons and adherents, and cause enquiry to "be made respecting them through every hall in "the said university; and that obtaining intel-"ligence of their names and persons, you do "compel all and each of them to abjure their "errors by ecclesiastical censures, and by any "canonical penalties whatsoever, under pain of the "greater anathema, the which we now denounce "against all and each who shall not be obedient." * "And the absolving of such as may incur the "sentence of this instrument, we reserve wholly "to ourselves." But the chancellor had scarcely left the place of meeting when the suspicions of the primate appear to have been renewed. In a letter, dated the same day with the above, and from the same place, he informs Robert Rigge that he had learnt from credible information, and partly from experience, his disposition to favor "the aforesaid damnable conclusions," and his intention to molest by his authority, the persons who should oppose them in the schools of the university. In consequence of this information,

the archbishop thus writes, "we admonish the "master Robert, chancellor as before named; "the first, second, and third time, and peremp- "torily, that thou dost not grieve, hinder, nor "molest judicially, nor extra-judicially, publicly "nor privately, nor cause to be grieved, hindered "or molested, nor procure indirectly by thyself "or others to be grieved, the foresaid clerks se- "cular or regular, or such as favor them in the "points determined in their scholastic acts, or in "any other condition whatsoever." The ecclesiastics who had joined with the primate in his recent process against the chancellor of Oxford, were various of them members of the university; and as on returning to that seminary, the men who had lately sat in judgment upon the conduct of its principal officer, would be required to bow to his jurisdiction, it was deemed important to secure themselves from that resentment which their fears might with reason anticipate.

The synod which we have seen convoked on the nineteenth of May, and re-assembled on the twelfth of June, was again convened on the eighteenth; the twentieth, and the twenty-eighth of the same month, and on the first and twelfth of the month ensuing. In each of these meetings, the prosecution of Hereford and his associates was pursued, but with various success. The accounts, indeed, which their enemies have transmitted to us, are not only imperfect, but strangely contradictory and improbable; and as these form almost our only source of information respecting the accused, the facts of their conduct at this period, and their real character, are left in a great degree uncertain. Wycliffe, who at the

CHAP. III.

time of these proceedings, was residing on his rectory, would be a close observer of movements, intended to annihilate a cause which his life had been devoted to create and sustain. In one of his sermons, composed during this interval, he evidently refers to the measures in progress against Dr. Hereford and master John Ashton. By the first our reformer appears to have been assisted in his translation of the scriptures; and he is presumed to have been the author of some vernacular compositions designed to forward the projected reformation of the church. Ashton was known through nearly half the kingdom as an itinerant preacher, and according to the descriptions of his adversaries, was possessed of qualifications which gave an amazing efficiency to his peculiar vocation. To the doctrines of Wycliffe, he is said to have annexed certain novelties of his own, and Knighton, who describes his appearing in coarse attire, and with a staff in his hand, as the affectation of simplicity, bears testimony to the assiduity with which he frequented churches, and mingled in family circles, to effect the dissemination of his tenets. The same writer has preserved the outline of two sermons, said to have been delivered by this pedestrian teacher, the one at Leicester, the other at Gloucester. In these we recognise the opinions of our reformer with respect to the authority of the sovereign in relation to the church—the delusion and abuses of spiritual censures—the pernicious influence of religious temporalities—the unscriptural origin of many distinctions among the clergy—and the folly of transubstantiation, together with a special ex-

posure of the malignity which had always characterised crusades—those pernicious fruits of the dispensing power assumed by the priesthood. That neither the learning of Hereford, nor the ardour of Ashton might be any longer employed in the support of sentiments so hostile to the purposes of the hierarchy, both were summoned to appear before the archbishop, who had proudly annexed the name of "Chief Inquisitor" to his titles as primate.[22]

It is while this process is pending, that Wycliffe adverts to it in one of his parochial expositions. The persecution he attributes principally to the zeal of Courtney, whom he describes, as the "Great bishop of England," and as deeply incensed "because God's law is written in english, "to lewd men.[23] He pursueth a certain priest," observes the preacher, "because he writeth to "men this english, and summoneth him, and tra- "veleth him so that it is hard for him to bear it. "And thus he pursueth another priest, by the help "of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ's gos- "pel freely, and without fables. Oh! men who "are on Christ's behalf, help ye now against anti- "christ, for the perilous times are come which "Christ and Paul foretold!"[24] We can readily believe, that Wycliffe's auditory would sympathize sincerely with their pastor at this foreboding moment, but according to the statements of their persecutors, the efforts made by the men thus feelingly adverted to, in the hope of escaping from the strong hand of their oppressors were entirely fruitless.

It should, however, be remembered, that when

[22] Knighton, 2655—2660. Wilkins. [23] "Laymen." [24] MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. III.

authority was once appealed to, with a view to extirpate the doctrine of Wycliffe, it became a point of some importance to obtain, or at least to seem to have obtained, the victory attempted. Hereford and Reppington, after repeated struggles to evade any confession of their faith, are described as at length admitting the twenty-four conclusions censured by the synod, to be, with certain explanations, partly heretical and partly false. They are said also to have stated, that in no instance had they publicly avowed the tenets, which in these articles were imputed to them. Their confession, however, such as it was, proved so little satisfactory, that each member of the synod declared it to be with respect to numerous articles, "heretical, subtle, erroneous, and perverse." But all farther explanation of their creed was steadily refused, and for awhile the terrors of excommunication were braved, though its sentence, that it might operate as a warning to the infected, was pronounced with studious pomp and publicity. Ashton conducted his defence with considerable spirit, but affirmed that he should decline answering the questions of his judges on the conclusions adduced. He was repeatedly urged to make his communications to the court in latin, that no erroneous impression might be produced on the mind of the laity who were auditors; but the consciousness of a bad cause, and the spirit of domination which this policy betrayed, roused the indignation of the prisoner, and called forth an appeal to the people in the vernacular tongue, which the archbishop deemed it important to check by hastening the

business of the day to its close. In the sentence delivered, the silence of the suspected person was regarded as the proof of guilt, and he was accordingly exposed to all the consequences of holding the censured articles. CHAP. III.

Could we always submit to the authority of Knighton, we should believe that Hereford and Ashton delivered written confessions to the synod on the doctrine of the eucharist, and such as contained every mystery which the priesthood had connected with it. There is, however, serious ground to apprehend that these papers belong to that numerous class of productions which owe their origin to pious fraud. Were they authentic, we should not, perhaps, search in vain for them in the Courtney register, where so large a space is devoted to these proceedings. In addition to which, Ashton is made to affirm, in this document, that he had never questioned the tenet of transubstantiation; a statement which, according to the historian who has adopted it, was contrary to fact, and must have been a falsehood for which no motive may be assigned. And had Hereford descended to employ the language attributed to him on the same article, the rest in the series would doubtless have been disposed of in the same manner, and his escape could hardly then have been attributed purely to the interference of the duke of Lancaster. It appears, however, that Reppington ultimately bowed to the dogmas of the church, and that after a time he endeavoured to place his orthodoxy beyond suspicion, by persecuting his old associates. The dispute with Ashton, also, was subsequently so

CHAP. III.

far accommodated, as to admit of his returning to his scholastic exercises. But in 1387, Hereford was generally believed to be a disciple of Wycliffe, and so late as the year 1392, he solicited and obtained the protection of the court against the machinations of his enemies which had arisen from that cause.[25]

---

[25] It is from Knighton, (2657) that we learn the fact of Hereford's "escape from the bitterness of death" through the influence of the duke of Lancaster. But in 1391 we find him with the clergy who sat in judgment on the celebrated lollard, Walter Brute. By his indecision he appears to have forfeited the confidence both of the orthodox and of their opponents, and probably his own peace of mind. The firmness of the martyr is not the possession of every good man. Fox, i. 654. Mr. Godwin describes him as "the most refined and virtuous of the adherents of "Wycliffe." It may be that the lollards did not possess his superior as a scholar, but in the virtues of firmness and consistency he was surpassed by many of that class. Life of Chaucer, ii. 336. Ashton is said to have died as he lived. Thorp's Examination. Wals. 328. Lewis, c. x.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSECUTION——SKETCH OF ITS HISTORY——WYCLIFFE'S DEVOTIONAL ALLUSION TO THE EVILS OF HIS TIME——SUMMARY OF HIS COMPLAINT ADDRESSED TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT——EFFECT OF THAT APPEAL——THE REFORMER IS FORSAKEN BY LANCASTER——HIS PURPOSES UNALTERED BY THAT EVENT——HIS VIGOROUS PERCEPTION OF THE BEARINGS OF THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EUCHARIST, AND HIS CONFIDENCE OF ULTIMATE SUCCESS——HE APPEARS BEFORE THE CONVOCATION AT OXFORD——SUBSTANCE OF HIS CONFESSION——PERPLEXITY OF HIS JUDGES——HE RETIRES TO LUTTERWORTH——*HIS* LETTER TO THE PONTIFF.

CHAP. IV.

Persecution. A sketch of its history.

THE history of persecution is a continued illustration of its inefficacy, and of its turpitude; and the fact is not a little humiliating, that it should still have pervaded the nations of Christendom so entirely, and through so long a period. The civil penalties, by which the religious obedience of the ancient Israelite was enforced, are sufficiently explained by the circumstance that such were the peculiar features of the hebrew government, that to yield to the practice of idolatry, was to incur the guilt of treason. But no second theocracy has been established. The power accordingly, both of the sovereign and of the priest, may be presumed to have been materially affected by the departure of the mosaic economy. The limits now assigned to the authority of each, is a subject deserving the most severe and cautious attention, whether viewed in connexion with its many preliminary questions, or in its practical importance. The consequences which have arisen from opposite decisions respecting it, have ever

CHAP. IV.

been fraught with a large amount of good or evil to mankind.

Among the heathen states of antiquity, toleration was scarcely a virtue, as the local aspect of their idolatry left the province of every existing deity undisturbed, even while new objects of worship were introduced. But the gospel was not of a character to enter into any such partnership with human inventions. On the contrary, as being alone true, it claimed an undivided empire. By primitive believers, its pretensions in this respect were fearlessly urged; nor were their descendants concerned, either to deny or to conceal this peculiarity, though but too well apprised of the loathing which it had brought upon them from all the votaries of gentile worship. In some instances, the unearthly devotedness which not unfrequently distinguished the professors of christianity at that period, was augmented and purified by the external sufferings thus produced. But in others, the ascendancy of the doctrines of the cross over the turbulence of the passions was less complete, and the violence employed to suppress the truths of the gospel excited a re-action of the same temper in their support. These inflammable materials had been for some time increasing in the church, when under Constantine, christianity was announced as the religion of the empire. As the consequence of that event, these dangerous elements became so far dominant among the hominal adherents of the gospel, as to leave the partisans of the ancient idolatry, to deplore the severity of the weapons which they had recently wielded with

so much freedom against its opponents. But when attempts to convince the understanding of its errors, by means of confiscations and torture and exile, were not only considered as rational; but when to be zealous in the application of this species of logic, was to secure the reputation of unusual sanctity; it was not the grosser forms of heathenism merely, which would feel the disastrous influence of this strange delusion. The diversities of opinion observable among the avowed disciples of the same master, soon attracted the critical attention of churchmen. These differences were found to be of a most obstinate mould; and no little artifice was employed, to clothe the peculiarities of dissentients with almost every feature of impiety; as the best method of vindicating the infliction of penalties which had been awarded to idolatry, on such as dissented either less or more from the established creeds. Nor is it to be doubted, that the guilt of transferring the maxims of persecution from the policy of pagan Rome, to that of the papal hierarchy, so as to render them the law both of its head and of its members, chiefly belongs to the higher orders of the clergy. Amid the declining civilization of the empire, the power of that class of men steadily increased, until their supremacy over the conscience of their victims was completed. It is, however, a stubborn, and a most disgraceful fact, that with every step of their progress, persecution became more systematic and relentless. The notion of divine right, was by degrees connected with the regal office to the exclusion of every subordinate authority; and while monarchs, if obedient to the will

CHAP. IV.

of the church, were placed on a level with the sovereigns of Judah; ecclesiastics claimed to be the representatives of Deity, and to an extent greatly surpassing any thing to which the jewish priesthood had aspired. The ministers of the christian sanctuary, being once acknowledged as the unerring interpreters of the will of Heaven; to dissent from the church, whether its judgment were interposed to enforce the claims of princes; or to determine articles of faith, was to resist the Almighty, and to fall under the double censure of the rebel and the impious. Monarchs, indeed, were sometimes slow to act on the suggestions of their pastors, as to the best mode of subduing the heresies of their people; but such as were solicitous to hold the sceptre with a steady hand, were usually induced to become the instruments of almost any scheme, which promised to the church the reverence claimed for her supposed infallibility.

It is true the civil authorities of England, previous to the age of Wycliffe, are less stained with the blood which was so freely shed for the protection of orthodoxy than were the rulers of almost every state upon the continent. But this peculiarity arose simply from the circumstance, that until the former half of the fourteenth century had passed, certain encroachments in discipline formed the only matters of serious complaint, either with the people or with the civil power. The honor of first attempting to render it a part of our statute law, that on all questions of heresy, the magistrate should become the executioner of the will of the church, belongs to the zeal of the primate Courtney. Nor was the effort

wholly futile, though its immediate result was trivial when compared with its design. The degree of success, however, which attended this claim on the secular power, served as a precedent and a motive in the series of measures, which were ere long to involve both the church and the state, in all the odious consequences which have in general arisen from a coercive warfare with religious opinion. Wycliffe marked this tendency of events, and by his benevolent genius the progress of intolerance was for awhile impeded. His declining health, or the fear, perhaps, of encountering the political influence of Lancaster, proved the security of the reformer during the late prosecution of his friends. It is stated, indeed, that Hereford and Reppington, when falling before the strength of their antagonists, solicited the protection of John of Gaunt, and that the reply of that nobleman consisted of instructions respecting the duty of submitting, in all such matters, to the decision of their ordinaries. That such an appeal was made, and that such was its result is perhaps true, but that it did not include the name of Wycliffe, may be safely inferred from his marked reference to the "noble duke," in the petition which he presented immediately afterwards to the king and the parliament.

Wycliffe's devotional allusion to the evils of the day.

It appears, also, from a discourse composed by the rector of Lutterworth about this period, that he was not ignorant of the artifice and corruption to which his adversaries had resorted, in the hope of opposing the force of the civil government, to the intended reformation of religion. Commenting on the entombment of Christ, and on the vain

effort of the priests and the soldiers to prevent his resurrection, the preacher adverts to the measures recently adopted, both by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of his country, with a view to consign the gospel to a ceaseless oblivion. "Thus," he observes, "do our high-priests and "our new religious fear them, lest God's law, after "all they have done, should be quickened. There- "fore make they statutes stable as a rock, and "they obtain grace of knights to confirm them, "and this they well mark with the witness of "lords; and all lest the truth of God's law hid "in the sepulchre, should break out to the know- "ing of the common people. Oh! Christ, thy "law is hidden thus, when wilt thou send thine "angel to remove the stone, and shew thy truth "unto thy flock? Well I know that knights have "taken gold in this case, to help that thy law "may be thus hid, and thine ordinances con- "sumed. But well I know that at the day of doom "it shall be manifest, and even before when thou "arisest against all thine enemies."[1]

While such was the policy of the leading members of the hierarchy, it was obvious to Wycliffe that nothing remained but to submit to their despotism, or to attempt a counteraction of their efforts in relation to the court and the senate. Nearly sixty winters had now passed over the head of our reformer, and sickness had made a serious inroad on his physical strength—that important auxiliary of intellectual vigour and prowess. But his furrowed brow, and whitened hairs, were

[1] MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

still allied to an energy, which could ill submit to a tame surrendering of the fortress of equity, and truth, and godliness. Each step in the progress of the late persecutions, was seen as facilitating the meditated blow against himself. Should it be his lot to disappear beneath the fangs of the rising tyranny, it was his resolve that his countrymen should be distinctly informed of the opinions for which he suffered. In conformity with this determination, and with his message to the chancellor of Oxford some months previously, he presented a summary of the more important of his tenets in the form of a petition, to Richard and the english parliament. The assembly to which this appeal was addressed, was summoned on the fifteenth of October, and met on the nineteenth of November,[2] and in this document it is supposed to be already convened. It appears also to have been known that in this meeting of "the "great men of the realm, both seculars and men "of holy-church," the articles included in this appeal, would become the matters of discussion. The doctrine thus submitted to their judgment, is said to be "proved both by authority and "reason," and this that the "christian religion may "be increased, maintained, and made stable; since "our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, "is head and prelate of this religion, and shed "his precious heart's blood and water out of his "side, on the cross, to make this religion perfect "and stable, and clean without error."[3]

[2] Fox. Acts, &c.

[3] MS. Ad regem et parliamentum. C. C. Cambridge, and in the Cotton Library. It will be remembered as one of the two works printed by Dr. James in 1608.

CHAP. IV.

Summary of Wycliffe's "Complaint."

The articles thus introduced, are four in number. The first relates to the vows of the religious as a device of man, and of no obligation: the second asserts that "secular lords may lawfully, and "meritoriously, in many cases, take away temporal "goods given to men of the church." In the third it is affirmed that even tythes, and other voluntary offerings, should be withdrawn "from prelates "or other priests whoever they be," on their yielding to "great sins, as pride, simony, and man-"slaying—gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery." In the last, the reformer prays that the doctrine of the eucharist, "which is plainly taught by "Christ and his apostles in the gospels and epistles, "might be also openly taught in the churches."

Nearly half the document is occupied, in demonstrating the first of these positions; and to discern the propriety of this, it should be remembered that the archbishop found the most efficient auxiliaries of his arbitrary power, in the begging fraternities and the monks. On the ground of their alleged seclusion from the world, and contempt of its distinctions and indulgencies, their claims to the credit of an unusual sanctity were often but too successfully urged. It has appeared that the sentence which excluded every teacher of Wycliffe's doctrine on the eucharist from the university, was the effect of their influence; and in the synod which had since prosecuted his known admirers with all possible severity, the same species of authority prevailed. It became important, therefore, in the judgment of the reformer, to shew distinctly that so far from meriting the pre-eminence conceded to

them, the vows which gave to these persons their distinction were a human invention; one also of comparatively recent date; and in various ways injurious to religion, and the interests of society.

In this memorable appeal, these points are fully proved. The writer especially adverts to the practice of the religious in forsaking one rule, deemed less perfect, to embrace another regarded as of higher sanctity. The rule of Christ, it is contended, must of necessity be the most complete, and it is thence inferred that all men should be held free from any painful consequences in relinquishing any "private sect," the contrivance of "sinful men," for the rule of the gospel. This, it is justly observed, should be the more readily admitted by the parties alluded to, as they were not slow to forget their vows of poverty and seclusion, when the attractions of a mitre were allowed to descend upon them. The change, also, which followed in such cases, is described as savoring less of an increased separation from the world, than of an actual return to it. If to all this, it should be replied, that the customs of the religious are not at variance with the institute of the Saviour and of his apostles, but rather parts of it; the persons so reasoning, are called upon to name the portion of holy writ, containing the articles of discipline peculiar to canons, and monks, and mendicants; and to expose the failure which must be attendant on the effort, various of the regulations adopted by these communities are specified. Respecting this moiety of the work, in which that momentous doctrine, the sufficiency of scripture, is maintained

CHAP. IV.

in the most satisfactory terms, a correct idea may be formed from the following extract. "It is intended to exhibit the supreme authority of the inspired writings, and clearly assumes the right of private judgment. 'Inasmuch as one patron or founder is more perfect, more mighty, more wise, more holy, and in more charity than another, insomuch is the first patron's rule better and more perfect than is that of the second. But Jesus Christ, the patron of the christian religion, given to the apostles, passeth without measure, in might, and wisdom, and good-will, the perfection of every patron of any private sect—his rule is therefore more perfect. Also that Christ's pure religion, without the addition of sinful men's errors is the most perfect of all, may be thus shewn. For either Christ might give such a rule, the most perfect to be kept in this life, and would not; and then he was envious—as St. Austin proveth in other matters—or else Christ would ordain such a rule, and might not; and then Christ was unmighty, but to affirm that of Christ is heresy—or else he might and could, but would not; and then he was unwise, and that is a heresy no man should consent to hear. Therefore it is plain, that Christ both might, and could, and would ordain a rule the most perfect that should be kept in this life. And so Christ of his endless wisdom and charity, has ordained such a rule. And thus on each side men are bound, upon pain of heresy, and of blasphemy, and of condemnation, to believe and acknowledge that the religion of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and kept by

"them in its own freedom, without addition from "sinful man's error, is the most perfect of all; and "so to hinder no man from forsaking a private re- "ligion, and keeping the pure religion of Christ." CHAP. IV.

These reasonings are also enforced by the fact, that in the early ages when even monachism was unknown, "the church increased and pros- "pered most, for then almost all men disposed "themselves to martyrdom after the example of "Christ." His conclusion therefore is, that "it "were not only now meritorious to the church; "but most meritorious, to live so in all things "and by all things." As the consequence of these opinions with regard to the gospel and its Author, Wycliffe claimed for himself and others the same liberty in adhering to the simple order instituted by the Redeemer, which was every where conceded to such as preferred the wisdom of more recent systems of discipline. And had the religious been disposed to tolerate this exclusive attachment to scriptural vows of spirituality and seclusion, their own authority might have been less disturbed and of longer continuance. But they saw this species of religious profession as reflecting on every other: regarding them as innovations of yesterday: and as in reality opposed to the veneration which must be due to a Guide, who is considered as alone above the influence of error. Hence arose the spirit of persecution, and hence the reaction which violence rarely fails to produce.

In the second of the articles contained in this paper, the reformer combats the theory of certain friars, who had maintained on some recent and

CHAP. IV.

public occasion; that both the persons and the property of the clergy, and of the religious, were strictly beyond the jurisdiction of the sovereign. The absurdity of this favorite position is again exposed, and principally by tracing it to its results. If to hold the opposite of this doctrine, "be error "touching the health of man's soul," it is remarked that the race of english princes, and the men who have formed the successive councils of the realm, must be viewed as a lost community. And, not to dwell on the recorded opinions of such parties, as opposed to this mendicant tenet; nor on the measures which frequently arose from them; it is observed, that if they were in error in this matter, it must then follow that should "an "abbot and all his convent prove open traitors, "conspiring the death of the king and the queen, "and of other lords, and exert themselves to de- "stroy the whole realm, the king may not take "from them one halfpenny or farthing, nor its "worth, since all these are temporal goods. Also, "though other clerks should send to our enemies "all the rents which they have in our land, and "whatever they may rob or steal of the king's "liege men, yet our king may not punish them "by one farthing, nor farthing's worth. Also, by "this doctrine of friars, though monks or friars, "or other clerks, whatever they be, should slay "lord's tenants, the king's liege men, and disho- "nor lord's wives, yea the queen, which God for- "bid, or the empress, yet the king may not pu- "nish them by the loss of one farthing. Also, it "followeth plainly, that men called men of holy- "church may dwell in this land at their liking,

" and do what kind of sin; and what kind of treason " they like; and the king, nevertheless, may not " punish them, neither in their temporal goods nor " in their bodies, since if he may not punish them " in the less, he may not in the greater. And " should they make one of themselves king, no se- " cular lord may hinder him in conquering all " the secular lordships of this earth: and these " men might destroy all lords and ladies, and " their blood and affinity, without any penalty " arising in this life, either in the body or estate. " Ye lords! then see and understand, with what " punishing they deserve to be chastised, who thus " hastily and wrongfully have condemned you " for heretics, forasmuch as you do execution and " righteousness according to God's law and man's. " For the chief lordship of all temporalities in this " land, both of secular men and religious, pertains " to the king, of his general governing, or else he " were not king of all England, but merely of a " little part thereof." This refutation of the ambitious tenet to which the petition refers, is farther strengthened by the language of St. Paul, respecting magistracy, as " God's ordinance;" and it is remarked, that the apostle, who " putteth " all men in subjection to kings, out taketh " never a one." From these premises, the known doctrine of our reformer concerning the power of the crown, as extending over all the sources of clerical emolument, and over the persons of the clergy in all civil affairs, is in conclusion adduced.

In the third article, which relates to the application of " tythes and offerings" as required " by " God's law, and the pope's law," the claims of

CHAP. IV.

the most devoted among the clergy are limited to the needful matters of food and clothing; while the ignorant, the indolent, or the vicious, are declared to have forfeited all right to the smallest part in any apportionment of the goods of the church. In support of this doctrine, the writer appeals to the conduct of Tobit, in withholding his offerings from the priests of Jeroboam, and rendering them to the true descendants of Aaron, who resided at Jerusalem; to the story of Eli and his sons; and to the advice of Paul in his letters to Timothy. From the authorities of a subsequent date, the names of Jerome, Augustine, and of Gregory the great, are cited, together with those of Bernard and Grossteste, as more or less favorable to the position advanced. Two things are said, in conclusion, to follow from what is thus introduced. First, that if curates do not their office in word and example as God has commanded, their people are under no obligation to pay them tythes and offerings, since the end for which such payments are made is wanting: secondly, that curates are more guilty in withholding their teaching by word and example, than their parishioners would be in refusing tythes and offerings, even though the office of the curate were well performed. It is true that to withhold these contributions in such a case, is frequently described as a neglect of duty; but dissenting from the casuists of the period on this point, Wycliffe affirms the latter delinquency, though serious, to be far less criminal than the former.

The last article of this complaint, we have

noticed as relating to the doctrine of the eucharist. But though one in which the reformer claims it as a right to publish freely the scripture representations of that sacrament, he abstains from any statement of his peculiar views of that service, and adverts chiefly to the evils arising from "the worldly business of priests." His manner of concluding the portion of this work, relating to tythes and offerings, is expressive of that sense of justice, humanity, and religion, which sustained the mind of the rector of Lutterworth, while doomed, as at this hour to witness the growing strength of the enemies of reform: "Ah! Lord "God," he exclaims, "can it be reason to con- "strain the poor people to provide a worldly "priest, sometimes unable both of life and know- "ledge, in his pomp and pride, covetousness and "envy, gluttony, drunkenness and lechery, in "simony and heresy, with a fine horse, and "gay saddles, and bridles ringing by the way, "and himself in costly clothes, and fine furs— "and to suffer their wives and children, and poor "neighbours to perish from hunger, thirst, and "cold, and other mischiefs of the world! Ah! "Lord Jesus Christ! since within a few years, "men paid their tythes and offerings of their "own free will, to good men, and able to conduct "the great worship of God, to the profit and "beauty of the holy church fighting on the earth, "can it be needful or lawful that a worldly priest "should destroy this holy and approved custom, "constraining men to forsake this freedom, and "turning tythes and offerings to wicked uses or

CHAP. IV.

"at least to those which are not so good as was "the custom before?"

Effect of this appeal.

The impression made by this document on the parliament now assembled was considerable, and to Wycliffe must have been highly gratifying. In a petition to the king, the members of the commons cited the provisions of the statute. To effect the imprisonment of the new preachers and their abettors, until obedient to the church, it had rendered every english sheriff the tool of his diocesan; devolving upon the more alarming penalties at his command, the correction of errors which neither the persuasions nor the terrors of an infallible church had been sufficient to destroy. And as this important innovation "was never agreed to "nor granted by the commons, but whatsoever was "moved therein, was without their assent," it is required "that the said statute be disannulled," and it is farther declared to be "in no wise their "meaning, that either themselves, or such as shall "succeed them, shall be farther bound to the "prelates than were their ancestors in former "times."[4]

But to procure the enactment or the repeal of statutes, however formally it might be obtained, was but a minor part of the labour which devolved on our parliaments in those ages. Nothing, indeed, was more common, than the violation of promises and even of oaths, on the part of the sovereign or of the government; and to justify this bad faith the secret or avowed pretext generally

[4] Fox. Acts and Monuments. i. 576. Lingard. iv. 259.

was, that the concessions made, had been improperly extorted. Hence it was found that to secure the enforcement of laws, was commonly a work of much greater difficulty, than to effect their apparent adoption. From this disgraceful circumstance, arose the custom of so frequently confirming anew the most acknowledged principles of the constitution. Nor is it at all doubtful, that to this state of things, as pervading the cabinets of Europe, the court of Rome had greatly contributed, as well by her general policy as by the more flagrant abuses of her dispensing power. With the papal maxims, the present archbishop of Canterbury was thoroughly imbued, and to him we may attribute the exclusion of this act of repeal, so honorable to its authors, from the parliamentary records; and also the subsequent conduct of the young king, by which his message to the commons, in reply to their petition, was virtually falsified.

In his letters, Richard had been made to denounce the penalties of exclusion from the university, imprisonment, and confiscation, against all who should hold the doctrine of Wycliffe, or such as should in any way favor its abettors. And though the monarch subsequently declared himself pleased with the repeal of the statute on which these instructions were founded, the coercive measures which it had been framed to sanction were still pursued, and with but too much success. It was, as we have remarked, on the 19th of November, that the parliament and the convocation assembled at Oxford. The clergy there convened were informed by the primate, that the business before them was

CHAP. IV.

to grant a subsidy to the crown; and to remedy certain disorders which had too long disgraced the university, and were extending rapidly to the whole community, of whose spiritual safety they were the properly constituted guardians. In this meeting the archbishop had concentrated his whole strength, and the rector of Lutterworth was now summoned to answer before him on the articles which were regarded as stating his opinions. There were circumstances, however, which served greatly to narrow the field of discussion on this occasion. On all the more important questions of ecclesiastical polity, Wycliffe had spoken freely in his various writings, and in his address to "the "secular lords and men of holy-church" who were now met. But the resentment of the commons, which the meditated encroachment of the prelates had excited, was not to be overlooked, and it appears to have suggested a peculiar caution in the method of proceeding at this juncture. It was not difficult to perceive, that the details of discipline, as less important, and less protected by the supposed infallibility of the church, might form but a feeble and inefficient ground of accusation; and as the doctrine of the eucharist was an acknowledged article of faith, and one also of the gravest moment, the opinions of the suspected in relation to this sacrament became the subject of special inquisition. Lancaster, who appears to have been concerned at this crisis to avoid any renewal of hostilities with the clergy, is said to have advised the reformer to submit in all doctrinal matters to the decision of the pre-

He is forsaken by Lancaster

lates.[5] But Wycliffe, though sensible of the aid which he had derived from the patronage of that illustrious nobleman, had advanced to the point from which there was no receding, except at the cost of consistency and truth. The aspect of things at this moment, presented a powerful test both to the integrity, and to the energy of his character; and the result has served to place him among the most distinguished of confessors. To have denied his doctrine on the eucharist,—or indeed simply to have abstained from teaching it, would have been to continue sheltered from the hostilities of the orthodox by the power of one who was still the second man in the kingdom. To proceed in exposing the weakness and impiety of the received opinions on that sacrament, and this in opposition to the serious admonitions of John of Gaunt; was deliberately to encounter the unbridled malevolence of his enemies. The latter course, however costly as it might prove, was the object of his choice. We also learn, and from a writer, who was not a little solicitous to fasten the disgrace of equivocation on the name of Wycliffe, that the command of the duke, in this particular, affected his purposes in no degree more than the injunctions of the primate. And it is added by the same authority, that in his public defence on the sacrament of the altar, "like an obstinate heretic, he refuted all the "doctors of the second millenary."[6]

His purposes unaltered by that event.

To understand the zeal with which the reformer

[5] In the Sudbury Register, (Wilkins. iii. 171.) the duke is highly commended for his conduct in this instance.

[6] Walsingham, Hist. 283.

CHAP. IV.

assailed the errors of transubstantiation, we must bear in mind the views which he had adopted concerning it. The adoration of a small portion of bread in the place of the Deity, he felt himself compelled to regard as the most offensive species of idolatry. The conduct of the priest also, in pretending to re-make his Maker, he vehemently pronounced to be the last work of presumption and blasphemy. Nor was this all; for in a treatise published soon after this period, and which, from its extent and its character, we may presume to have been already in a great degree composed, he attacks the orthodox mysteries connected with the eucharist from a most luminous perception of their general bearing. So long as these are received in the church, their tendencies he affirms must be to facilitate the introduction of any dogma serving to elevate the priesthood, however much opposed to scripture, to reason, or to the senses. The doctrine of a real presence, he declares to be the offspring of Satan; and the author of evil while inventing it, is viewed as reasoning thus with himself. "Should I once so far beguile the "faithful of the church, by the aid of antichrist, "my vicegerent, as to persuade them to deny "that this sacrament is bread, and to induce "them to regard it as merely an accident; there "will be nothing then which I may not bring "them to receive, since there can be nothing "more opposite to the scriptures, or to common "discernment. Let the life of a prelate be then "what it may, let him be guilty of luxury, simony, "or murder, the people may be led to believe "that he is really no such man—nay, they may

His views of the bearing of this controversy.

CHAP. IV.

"then be persuaded to admit, that the pope is "infallible, at least with respect to the matters "of christian faith; and that, inasmuch as he is "known by the name Most Holy Father, he is "of course free from sin."[7] It thus appears, that the object of Wycliffe was to restore the mind of man to the legitimate guidance of reason, and of the senses in the study of holy writ; and in judging of every christian institute; and that if the doctrine of transubstantiation proved peculiarly obnoxious to him, it was because that dogma was seen as in the most direct opposition to this generous design. To him it appeared, that while the authority of the church was so far submitted to, as to involve the adoption of this monstrous tenet, no limit could possibly be assigned to the schemes of clerical imposture and oppression.

His confidence of ultimate success.

Nor did the reformer wholly fail to experience that stimulus in his present unequal contest, which arises from the confidence of an ultimate triumph. In an earlier chapter of the treatise last cited, he exclaims, "Oh! that all who believe could see "how antichrist and his instruments condemn "the sons of the church, and persecute them "even to death, because they maintain this truth "as taught in the gospel. Truly aware I am, "that the doctrine of the gospel may for a season "be trampled under foot, that it may be over-"powered in high places, and even suppressed "by the threatenings of antichrist; but equally "sure I am, that it shall never be extinguished, "for it is the recording of truth itself. Heaven

[7] Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 7. The substance of this passage occurs in the MS. Contra Fratres, Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83.

CHAP. IV.

" and earth shall pass away, but so shall not my " words.' Let the spirit of the faithful therefore " awake itself, and diligently enquire as to the " nature of this venerable sacrament, whether it " be not indeed bread as the gospel, the senses, " and reason assure us. Certain, verily I am, " that the idolaters who make to themselves " gods; are not ignorant of the real nature of these " gods, though they pretend there is a something " of deity within them, which is communicated, " as by the God of gods." To believe this, he remarks, is to sink in the scale of perception beneath the pagan or the brute; and from what has been adduced the conclusion is said to follow, " that this venerable sacrament is naturally bread, " and sacramentally, the body of Christ."[8]

His appearance before the convocation at Oxford.

But to return to the proceedings of the convocation at Oxford. The assembly on which it devolved to ascertain and to decide on the opinions of Wycliffe, consisted of the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Lincoln, Norwich, Worcester, London, Salisbury, and Hereford, with a numerous selection of doctors, together with the chancellor of the university, and many of the inferior clergy. Around these also, the laity were crowded as auditors, variously interested in the design of the meeting. Before this imposing array of authority and learning, and all marshalled against him, stood the rector of Lutterworth. More than forty years had now elapsed, since Oxford had first become pleasingly connected with his sympathies. Through that long

[8] Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 4.

period it had been more or less his home; and viewing it as an establishment, formed to nurse the intellect of the nation in subservience to religion and philanthropy, he had always been among the foremost to defend its jurisdiction as independent of foreign controul, and especially of that which proceeded from the papacy. He was now grey with age, or rather, perhaps, as the effect of those religious solicitudes, and that mental activity, which appear always to have surpassed the ability of his feebler nature, and to have been constantly exposing him to the inroads of disease. The place in which he now appeared, and under the charge of so much delinquency, had frequently echoed to the utterance of his praise by admiring converts; and to the sound of his voice, as the advocate of doctrines endeared to the purer ages of the church. Nor is it to be supposed that his numerous followers had become suddenly extinct. But at this moment the scale of power had so far descended in favor of the established superstitions, that, like another Elijah, the reformer stands apparently alone amid the generation of his countrymen. Still, while certain affecting recollections, were doubtless fresh within him; and while his present circumstances were quite alarming enough to have shaken even an extraordinary mind; such was his conviction of the goodness of his cause, that his firmness remains wholly unbroken. His defence we have seen, was such as to extort from adversaries the praise of an unrivalled acuteness; and his written confessions, which through the same channel have been transmitted to us, contain the most distinct an-

CHAP. IV.

nouncements of whatever he had previously taught on the sacrament to which they relate. That two confessions referring to this article should be attributed to him, will be in part explained by observing, that the one is in latin, and the other in the vernacular language. In addition to which, the first treats the question in a style, which the more learned of his judges must have felt to be adapted to their taste, but for the purpose of defeating them with their own weapons; while the english document touches but distantly on the distinctions of the schools, and is framed to meet the popular apprehension. It was not unusual to exact confessions from suspected persons in this double form; and had those of Wycliffe disclosed any abandonment of opinion, both would probably have been read with studied publicity in the schools of the university, and from the pulpits of the clergy. In this manner the twenty-four articles had been published, which were condemned some months previously by the synod at the preaching friars.

Substance of his confession.

In his latin confession,[9] Wycliffe applies himself to demonstrate, and in the dialect of the schools, "that this venerable sacrament is *naturally* bread "and wine, but *sacramentally* the body and blood of "Christ." With a view to this object, he observes, that there are six modes of being which may be attributed to the body of the Saviour; and that three of these may be affirmed of that body as it exists in the eucharist; and three of its state as peculiar to the heavenly world. In the eucharist, he is virtually, spiritually, and sacramentally present,

[9] See it in the Appendix, No. 6.

but his substantial, his corporeal, and his dimensional presence, is declared to pertain exclusively to his mode of being in the celestial state. The reformer then repeats the doctrine maintained by himself and his followers: denies the charge of their adoring the elements of bread and wine: and observes that he had detected the fallacies of his opponents, who, in citing the language of the fathers on this sacrament, were always disposed to confound the notion of a sacramental, with that of an identical presence! The result of this mistake is affirmed to be, the insane fiction of an accident, or quality, without a subject;—a tenet declared to be equally insulting to the church, and injurious to God.

The english confession, if we discard its orthography, and something of its obsolete expression, will state his judgment on this important article more distinctly than any abridgment in other language. "We believe," he writes, "as Christ "and his apostles have taught us, that the sacra- "ment of the altar, white and round, and like to "our bread or host unconsecrated, is verily God's "body in the form of bread; and if it be broken "into three parts, as is the custom of the church, "or into a thousand, every one of these parts is in "the same sense God's body. And just as the "person of Christ is very God, and very man, so "the church through many hundred winters hath "believed the same sacrament to be very God's "body, and very bread, since it is the form of "God's body, and the form of bread, as Christ "and his apostles taught. Hence, St. Paul nameth "it never without calling it bread, and he, accord-

CHAP. IV.

" ing to our belief, obtained his knowledge in this
" matter from God. And the arguments of here-
" tics against this doctrine, a christian man may
" easily answer. For just as it is heresy to
" believe that Christ is a spirit and no body, so
" is it heresy to suppose that this sacrament is
" God's body and no bread, for it is both together.
" But the greatest heresy which God has suffered
" to come to his church, is to suppose that this
" sacrament is an accident, or a mere quality
" without a substance, and may in no sense be
" God's body; for Christ himself, as witnessed by
" John, said, 'This is my body.' And if they say,
" that according to this shewing holy church has
" been in heresy many hundred winters, in truth
" so it is; and especially since the fiend was
" loosed, who is witnessed of by the angel to St.
" John, as to be loosed in a thousand winters
" after Christ was ascended into heaven. But it
" is also to suppose, that many saints who died
" in the mean time, were purified from this error
" before their death. Mark how great a diver-
" sity there is, between us who suppose that this
" sacrament is very bread in its kind, and between
" heretics who tell us that it is an accident without
" a subject. For before the fiend, the father of
" falsehood, was loosed, this deceitful prating was
" never invented. And how great diversity also
" there is between us who suppose that this sa-
" crament which in its kind is very bread, and
" sacramentally God's body; and heretics, who
" think and teach that this sacrament may in no
" wise be God's body. For I dare assuredly to
" say, if this were true, Christ and his saints died

"heretics, and that the greater part of holy church now believeth heresy. Therefore devout men suppose, that the council of friars in London, was the cause of the earthquake. For they put a heresy on Christ and on the saints in heaven: wherefore the earth trembled: the faithful land answered the voice of man for God, as it did in the time of his passion when he was sentenced to bodily death. May Christ, and his mother, who in the beginning destroyed all heresies, keep his church in a right belief of this sacrament; and move the king and his kingdom to ask sharply of his clerks this service—that all his possessioners, on pain of loosing all their temporalities, tell the king and his kingdom, and with sufficient evidence, what this sacrament is—and that all the orders of friars on pain of loosing their allegiance, tell the king and his kingdom, and with good reason also, what is the nature of this sacrament. For I am certain that a third part of the clergy, who defend this doutes that is here said, that they will defend it on pain of their life."[10]

It will be remembered by the reader, that to affirm the existence of bread in the eucharist after the words of consecration were pronounced, was to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation. In these papers this assertion is not only made, but repeated, and that with a plainness of speech which is obvious on the slightest attention. In addition to which, and with his characteristic

[10] Appendix, No. 7. The reformer is commonly understood as stating in the last sentence, that his doctrine on the eucharist was really that of a third among the clergy. The passage is obscure and difficult.

CHAP. IV.

hostility to whatever he saw as absurdity or error, Wycliffe has gratuitously annexed to these explicit statements of his own doctrine, an attack on that of his opponents; and one quite as uncompromising, as may be selected from any portion of his writings. We have previously remarked, that the properties of whiteness and roundness, pertaining to the sacramental bread before the act of consecration was performed, were acknowledged to exist afterwards; but that it was, nevertheless, contended, that the bread itself had ceased to be. The reformer well knew that this assertion, offering as it did the most hardy insult both to the reason and the senses, was the formal doctrine of the men who were now before him as his judges. The doctrine, however, he affirms to be erroneous, heretical, a mockery of human perception, the imputing of blasphemy to Christ and to his saints; and of all the antichristian delusions which had been poured upon the church since the fatal hour of Satan's enlargement, this is declared to be the most repugnant to the religion of the Bible!

Walsingham felt himself obliged to concede, that Wycliffe's confession was a re-assertion instead of a renunciation of his doctrine; but the sagacious Henry Knighton, while inserting the above paper in his annals, describes the reformer as recanting his opinions to escape the pains of death. Under shelter too, of this feeble authority, the calumny has often been repeated; and it still continues to be the ground of insinuations designed to fix upon Wycliffe the reproach of disingenuousness and timidity. This kind of proceeding may sometimes

have arisen from weakness and misapprehension, as would seem to have been the case with Knighton; in others, from indolence; and in many it is difficult to view it but as the effect of that imperfect reverence for truth, which, whether in politics or religion, is too commonly the result of party zeal. The denial, indeed, of transubstantiation in the above documents, is too evident to require farther notice;[11] and if there are expressions in both which betray some hesitation of thought, as to the precise manner in which the body and blood of Christ, are really present with their visible emblems in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is certain that these expressions were by no means peculiar to the present crisis. On the contrary, they had long been, and they continue ever after to be, of such constant occurrence in his numerous writings whenever this topic is referred to, that a volume might be filled with extracts, exhibiting every shade of sentiment and language observable in these more formal statements of his creed.[12]

---

[11] It will be remembered, that the chancellor, William de Berton, and his coadjutors, when condemning the doctrine of Wycliffe with such severe penalties, affirmed, in opposition to the reformer, that in this venerable sacrament, "the very body of Christ and his blood are really "contained, not only *figuratively* or *tropically*, but *essentially*, *substantially*, "and *corporally*; so that Christ is there verily in his own proper bodily "presence." The reader will perceive that the doctrine thus condemned is precisely that which Wycliffe re-asserts, and in the very terms of its former announcement.—See c. iii. and Appendix, Nos. 2. 3.

[12] Thus his work intitled, "Against the Blasphemies of the Friars," a manuscript extending to about forty quarto pages, and written after this time, contains every thing to be found in his confessions. The same firmness in denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the same partial obscurity as to the real mode of the Saviour's presence in the eucharist.—Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83. The first of their heresies is said to be "of the sacrament." "And as to the first we say, surely of our

CHAP. IV.

Perplexity of his judges.

But far as Wycliffe's confessions must have been, from affording satisfaction to his judges; it is easy to conceive that no little difficulty would be felt, in adjusting the measures to be adopted concerning him. It was known that he had acquired no mean place in the affections of the people, and that many of the learned and of the powerful had shewn themselves disposed to venerate his character. But from this period, and by virtue of letters obtained from the king, his connexion with Oxford was dissolved.[13] This, however, was not until the seeds of his doctrine had been there sown with sufficient profusion, to

" faith, that the white thing and round that the priest consecrates like " to the unconsecrated host, and which is broken and eaten, is verily God's " body in the form of bread." This he states as his doctrine, and proceeds to expose the absurdity of denying the existence of bread in the sacrament, after the words of consecration were uttered, adding, " we " should scorn those heretics who leave the words of Christ, and feign " words or sentence without authority"——" since bodily eating was " bidden of Christ, and this bodily eating might not be unless there were " bread, then this bread lasts after the sacreding." This is said to follow so plainly from the words of Christ, that should " a hundred cardinals" assert the contrary, they are not to be credited. His opponents also, are compared to " crabs who start aback," as soon as pressed to give any rational account of their doctrine.

Thus also he is continually expressing himself in his homilies. In that on Ephes. iv. he thus writes, " Christ saith, and saints after, that " the host which is sacred is verily Christ's own body in form of bread, " as christian men believe, and neither an accident without a subject, " nor nought as heretics say. An error in understanding holy writ hath " brought in this heresy." Again, on 1 Thessalonians, c. iv. " Would " God that men took heed to the speech of Paul in this place, both to " hold virtues and to flee heresies, for both are needful to men. Then " men should hear God's word gladly, and despise fables, and err not " in the sacred host, but grant that it is both things, both bread and " God's body." Thus also, in the discourse on the tenth chapter in the 1 Corinthians, noticing the evangelical meaning given by the apostle to the rock of the wilderness as a figure of Christ, he exclaims, " and " would God that heretics, in the matter of the sacred host, understood " these subtle words to the intent of the Holy Ghost, then should they " not fear to grant that this bread is God's body." [13] Fox. Acts, &c.

defy every subsequent effort to remove them. Sustained by the same benevolent providence, the reformer continued to be known as the rector of Lutterworth; and to effect a wider diffusion of his principles by means of his writings, we find him labouring with an industry which would seem to increase with his years and infirmities.[14]

He is cited by the pontiff.

It is about this period that Wycliffe was summoned by Urban to appear at Rome, and to answer before the chair of St. Peter, on the matters imputed to him.[15] His sufferings from paralysis, rendered his taking such a journey impracticable; and had it been otherwise, it would have been no part of wisdom to have exposed himself to a conflict more unequal than that which he was called to encounter nearer home. When the venerable Grossteste ventured to publish his opposition to a particular branch of papal corruption, he chose an indirect method of conveying his reproof.[16] "If we except the sins of "Lucifer and antichrist," he observes, "there is "not, nor can there be a greater crime, nor any "thing more opposed to the doctrine of the "gospel, or more odious and abominable in the "sight of Jesus Christ, than to desolate and destroy "the souls of men by depriving them of the

[14] Wood, (189) has taken up the calumny of Wycliffe's having descended to recant his opinions,—a statement which, as Dr. Wordsworth observes, does not accord with what the same writer "tells us in the "same page, that this confession was encountered by no less than six "several antagonists immediately after its publication." p. 49. The following are the names of the assailants: William de Berton, who had previously condemned the doctrine of Wycliffe, and repeats his anathema on this document; John Tyssington; Thomas Winterton; John Welleys; Ughtred Bolton; Simon Southry; all, with the exception of Berton, being either monks or friars.

[15] See Appendix, No. 8. [16] Paris, 870.

CHAP. IV.

" ministry and the spiritual aid of their pastors.
" It is impossible, therefore, that the holy apos-
" tolic see, which has received its power from the
" Lord Jesus Christ, for edification and not for
" destruction, can be guilty of such a crime, or
" any thing approaching to it, so hateful to God,
" so injurious to man. This would be a most
" manifest corruption of its authority, the for-
" feiture of all its glory, and the means of plung-
" ing it into the pains of hell." The bishop of Lincoln, however, well knew that the sins which he so forcibly condemns, were the daily practice of the pontiffs. Wycliffe, who was not unacquainted with the memorable remonstrance of this prelate, appears to have made it the model of his own address to the same power, but glances more widely over the features of its degeneracy, speaks with more plainness of the necessity of reformation, and also as to the principles which should lead to it. He begins his letter by observing, " I have joyfully to tell the belief which
" I hold, and always to the pope. For I suppose,
" that if my faith be right and given of God, the
" pope will gladly preserve it, and that if my
" faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it."
From this introduction he proceeds to declare his faith in the supreme authority of the scriptures, and his determination to follow the pontiff himself, but as he shall be found to follow the Author of the gospel. Describing " the gospel
" of Christ" as a " part of the body of God's
" law," he thus proceeds. " For I believe that
" Jesus Christ, who gave in his own person this
" gospel, is very God, and very man, and that

His reply.

" for this reason it passes all other laws. I sup-
" pose over this that the pope is most obliged to
" the keeping of the gospel among all men who
" here live, for the pope is the highest vicar that
" Christ has here on earth. But the greatness
" of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly
" greatness, but by this, that this same vicar
" follows Christ most in virtuous living, for thus
" teaches the gospel. That this is the judgment
" of Christ and his apostles, I take as a part of
" faith, since Christ, during the time that he
" walked here, was the most poor of all men
" both in spirit and in possession, for Christ says,
" that he had no where for to rest his head.
" And beside this, I take as a part of faith, that
" no man should follow the pope, no, nor any
" saint that is now in heaven, but inasmuch as
" he followed Christ; for James and John erred,
" and Peter and Paul sinned." If this assertion of religious independence would offend, the following statement would be equally unwelcome. " This," he observes, " I take as wholesome
" counsel, that the pope should leave his worldly
" lordship to worldly lords, as Christ enjoins him;
" and that he should speedily move all his clerks
" to do so, for thus did Christ, and taught his
" disciples thus, until the fiend had blinded this
" world." He concludes with his usual expression of willingness to retract his opinions, should they be proved erroneous; and by stating, that as the providence of the Redeemer was plainly opposed to his visiting Rome, he trusts the pontiff will not shew himself to be indeed antichrist, by insisting on a compliance with his pleasure on that point.

CHAPTER V.

STATE OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE ON THE CONTINENT DURING THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE——CAUSES OF THE PROTECTION FREQUENTLY AFFORDED TO ITS DISCIPLES BY THE SECULAR NOBILITY——PROBABLE MOTIVES OF THE DUKE OF LANCASTER IN PATRONIZING WYCLIFFE——THE REFORMER IS FAVORED BY THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, AND THE QUEEN MOTHER——ANNE OF BOHEMIA ——SKETCH OF THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF BOHEMIA——FARTHER NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S MORE DISTINGUISHED PARTISANS——GEOFFERY CHAUCER ——INFLUENCE OF POETRY ON THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH—— NOTICE OF ST. AMOUR——OF THE ROMAN DE LA ROSE——AND OF ROBERT LONGLAND.

CHAP. V.

State of the reformed doctrine on the continent during the age of Wycliffe.

WHILE the rector of Lutterworth was thus employed, in diffusing the principles of spiritual freedom through this once vassal kingdom; the descendants of the Vaudois and Albigenses, had so far increased in several provinces of the continent, as to begin to assume something of their former character. The secrecy to which their opinions and practices had been consigned, as affording their only hope of security from the return of persecution, was less cautiously observed; and their names in consequence occur with greater frequency in the bulls of the pontiffs, and in the decrees of clerical assemblies. Germany, from the period in which it owned the authority of its apostle, St. Boniface, had frequently yielded an asylum to the fugitive Vaudois. When the penalty of exile, was imposed on Peter Waldo and his followers; the states to which our countryman had been the first to announce the message of the gospel, became the residence of the greater

number, and long continued to be the principal scene of their labours. At the commencement of the thirteenth century, they were sufficiently numerous to provoke a formidable persecution from the emperor, Frederic the second; and the report of their sufferings which reached this country, is recorded by the monk of St. Albans. To the violence of the sword that of the inquisition succeeded. Conrad, who received his authority as chief inquisitor from the pontiff, exercised his office with the utmost cruelty, nor was there any thing either in civil rank or ecclesiastical distinction, to protect from his intolerance. He is said to have resorted to the ordeal of fire, affirming that the accused who suffered from holding the heated iron, were thus shewn to be worthy of passing through the fires of this world, to those of the next. The diocese of Treves, appears to have been particularly distinguished as the residence of the suffering Waldenses. In that district, schools were established for the instruction of their youth. These sectaries are described, as publishing aloud their dissent from the hierarchy, and their censures of the pope as antichrist; as declaring the prelates to be simonists and deceivers of the people; and as asserting, that they were themselves the only preachers of truth, and that rather than the truth should fail of advocates by an extinction of their race, God would not fail to raise up children to himself of the stones of the street. This fearless conduct, may have arisen from the weakness or the forbearance of the local authorities; or from the more zealous temper of the Vaudois pastors in the neighbour-

CHAP. V.

hood of Treves; it is certain that their contest with the established superstitions was of the most uncompromising character. Other teachers might bury the truth, and raise falsehood to its place; it was theirs to proclaim the christian doctrine free from the traditions of men, and instead of a feigned remission of sin, invented by the pope, to offer one that is certain and transcendant as being wholly of God. It is fully ascertained that the people avowing these sentiments existed in 1330, which was six years subsequent to the birth of Wycliffe, and in 1391, which was seven years after his decease. It was near the former period that an event took place, which served greatly to exasperate the clergy, but which suggests the most favorable conclusions as to the character of the persecuted. Echard, a monk, and a person who had acted with much severity as an inquisitor, had often felt himself unable to confute the reasonings with which such as were accused of heresy, defended their separation from the church of Rome; and after an interval, the impressions thus made on a mind apparently the most unpromising, issued in conversion. The monk not only professed to renounce his former opinions, but became the friend and companion of the men whom he had laboured to destroy as the worst enemies of piety. It will be supposed that with his former associates, Echard was an object of peculiar enmity. After a diligent search, they succeeded in securing his person, and at Heidelberg, he was sentenced to the flames; but his last moments were employed, in denouncing the injustice which doomed so many good men to perish, for main-

taining the truth of God as opposed to the devices of antichrist.[1] CHAP. V.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the fires of persecution were kindled in Paris, where a number of Waldenses was either imprisoned or condemned to the stake. Somewhat later, the zeal of orthodoxy was extended after the same manner, from the capital to the provinces: and twenty years previous to the birth of Wycliffe, a hundred and fourteen persons were apprehended by the Parisians as of Waldensian origin, and they are described as perishing in the flames with the constancy of martyrs. In the year 1378,—which will be remembered as that in which the english reformer was engaged in his contest with the papal delegates,—the clergy of Paris again appealed to that destructive element, on which, in common with their brethren, they were so much disposed to rely as their best argument against heresy.[2] How far their flocks were edified by such spectacles, we are not informed; but under Philip the fair, the fugitive sectaries were followed into Flanders, where the atrocities of one Robert Bougre, who, from being a professed Vaudois, became an inquisitor, were such as at length to excite the alarm of his colleagues. Measures were secretly adopted to deprive him of his power, and, convicted of many crimes, he was called to end his career of treachery and wanton depredation in a prison. It should be remarked, also, that it was in Flanders, where commerce was diffusing its equalities and its various benefits,

[1] Perrin. Hist. ii. c. ix. Matthew Paris, ann. 1220.
[2] Perrin. Hist. ii. c. xv.

CHAP. V.

that the adherents of the protestant doctrine were so few, and so hunted down by their oppressors, as to obtain the name of Turlupins, or the companions of the wolf.[3]

"About the year of our Lord 1370," observes the Vaudois historian, "the Waldenses of the valley of Pragela and Dauphine grew to so great a number in so small a country, that they were obliged to send away a certain portion of their younger people to seek some other place to inhabit. In their travel they found in Calabria certain waste lands but ill peopled, and yet very fertile, as they might well judge by those parts near adjoining. Finding the country fit to bring forth corn, wine, oil of olives, and chesnuts, and that there were hills fit for the breeding and nourishing of cattle, and also to furnish them with fuel, and with timber fit for building; they came unto the lords of the neighbourhood, to treat with them touching their abode in those districts. The said lords received them kindly, and agreed to their laws and requests, as to their rents, tenths, tolls, and penalties in case there fell out any differences between them. And so, having certain quarters or parts of the country thus assigned to them, many of them returned to advertise their parents of the good adventure that had happened unto them, in a rich country likely to abound in all temporal benedictions. Returning, they brought back with them from their parents and friends, whatever it pleased them to bestow upon them, and many of them married, and brought their wives into

[3] Ibid. Hist. ii. c. xiii. Matthew Paris, ann. 1220.

" Calabria, where they built certain small towns " and cities, to which their own houses were as " walls, as namely, St. Xist, la Garde, la Vicari- " cis, less Rousses, Argentine, St. Vincents, and " Montolieu. The lords of the said countries, " thought themselves happy in that they had met " with so good subjects, who had peopled their " lands, and made them to abound with all man- " ner of fruits; but principally because they found " them to be honest men and of a good conscience, " yielding unto them all those duties that they " could expect from the best of subjects. Only " their pastors and priests complained, that these " people lived not in the matter of religion as " others did. They made none of their children " priests or nuns, they were not fond of chanting, " of tapers, of lamps, of bells, no, nor of masses " for their dead. They had built certain temples, " but had not adorned them with images; and " they went not on pilgrimage; they caused their " children also to be instructed by certain strange " and unknown schoolmasters, to whom they " yield a great deal more honor than to them- " selves; paying nothing to them, except their " tythes, according to the agreement with their " lords. They doubted, therefore, that the said " people had imbibed some particular belief, which " hindered them from mingling themselves and " joining in alliance with the home-born people of " the land, and that they had no good opinion of " the church of Rome. The lords of those places " beginning to fear that, if the pope should take " notice, that so near his seat, there was a kind of " people who contemned the laws of the Romish

CHAP. V.

"church, they might chance to lose them, de-
"tained their priests from complaining of these
"people, who in every thing else had shewn them-
"selves to be honest men, and who had enriched
"the whole country, even the priests themselves.
"Thus were they maintained by their lords
"against all envy; and that, notwithstanding the
"priests, until the year 1560, at which time they
"could no longer defend them against the pope's
"thunderbolts."[4]

My apology for inserting this extended extract will be found in its characteristic simplicity, and in the fact that it contains whatever is known respecting a numerous and interesting people through an interval of nearly two centuries. Ten years had scarcely passed, since this emigration from the valley of Pragela and Dauphine, when the Waldenses of those districts, and such as were scattered through Ambrun, Vienna, Geneva, Savoy, and Avignon, with their neighbouring provinces, were assailed by persecution. Clement, the anti-pope, whose contest with Urban the sixth, had proved so favorable to the cause of the reformed opinions as promulgated by Wycliffe, had fixed his residence at Avignon; and in the year 1380, he empowered the mendicant, Francis Borelli to make inquisition for heresy through the french territories, and those of the allies of France. The prelates within those limits, —for there alone was the authority of Clement admitted,—were required to aid the zeal of the friar, that no diocese might be found a resting place to the proscribed Waldensian. Borelli opened his

[4] Perrin, Hist. c. v.

commission at Ambrun, by calling upon the inhabitants of Erassiniere, of Argentier, and of the valley Pute, to appear before him, under pain of excommunication. The summons was disregarded, and "the last, and most direful excommunication of offenders," was pronounced. From the year 1380, to the year 1393, the mendicant continued to exercise his authority with the same pitiless severity. The goods of such as were convicted, were divided; two-thirds to the clergy, and one to the magistrate; and all persons, as they would avoid the penalties denounced against the favorers of heretics, were forbidden to hold the remotest intercourse with them; or to perform in their behalf, the humblest service of humanity. The heretic, himself, if a priest, was deprived of his benefice and of his office; if a layman, his will became invalid, his inheritance lost, and along with it every virtue which the sacraments were supposed to convey, together with the rights of sepulture. Nor were these attempts to crush the race which had so long protested against the corruptions of the mystical Babylon, without some appearance of success. In the valley Pute alone, the names of a hundred and fifty men were preserved as those of persons who had fallen into the hands of the emissaries of Clement, and who had sealed their faith with their blood; not to mention "divers "women with many of their sons and daughters "well stricken in years."[5]

CHAP. V.

While the disciples of Peter Waldo, were thus

[5] Ibid. c. iii.

CHAP. V.

variously diffused through the provinces of Germany, of France, and of Italy itself; there is evidence that they were not unknown in Poland, in Spain, in Bohemia, and along the farthest shores of the Adriatic. But in every locality the same vicissitudes attended them. In no few instances, the profits which arose from the confiscation of their property appears to have supplied the principal motive to persecution;[6] in others it resulted from that mixture of irritation and contempt that is not unfrequently produced by objects which if too insignificant to create alarm, are sufficiently important to prove an annoyance. Despised, however, as the feeble remnant of the Waldenses certainly was at this period, they were to do much toward preserving among the nations of the continent, the seeds of that momentous revolution which stands so prominently connected with the names of Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther.

Motives of the nobility in thus favoring dissenters from the hierarchy.

The protection afforded to the new settlers in Calabria, by the lords of the soil, was in most of its circumstances, the counterpart of that which was generally conferred upon the same people by the nobility in the neighbourhood of their residence. In districts where their continuance was such as to render them known, this consequence almost invariably followed. It arose, perhaps, in some measure from those motives of interest which the industry and frugality of the sectaries contributed so largely to affect; and in others from an admiration of those unquestionable virtues which were found to distinguish these suspected

[6] Ibid.

communities. From considerations of this nature, nobles, who were not themselves prepared to abandon the communion of Rome, were often constrained to shelter a people known to be opposed to its pretensions. It is probable, also, that they frequently saw much to deplore in the ambition or the worldliness of the priesthood; and in the superstitions which were generally imposed on the people; and that perceiving the virtues which the papal sacraments were not always known to confer, could exist in contempt of them; they began in some instances to sympathize with these humble devotees in their sighs to escape from the yoke of the pontiffs. But the machinery of despotism, had been too long, and too completely adjusted, with a view to crush every victim that would be free, to admit of being materially injured by local and isolated efforts. The reformation to be attempted by such influence, could refer but to the details, or to the more glaring abuses of the system, leaving all its great principles and the sources of its strength undisturbed.

The whole of these motives, though in themselves of various excellence, imply much that is honorable with respect to the character of the parties who were so often indebted to them for protection. Considerations of the mixed character described, appear to have influenced the mind of the duke of Lancaster in patronizing the english reformer. The encroachments of the papacy, not only in reference to the honors and the property of the english church, but through that medium on the authority of the crown, and on the whole administration of the country, had evi-

Probable motives of John of Gaunt in patronizing Wycliffe.

CHAP. V.

dently displeased him; and rendered the labours of a man who could shew that such things were as unlike pure christianity, as they were unfriendly to the interests of the nation, an object worthy of his marked encouragement. Accordingly so long as the zeal of the rector of Lutterworth was limited to the discipline emanating from the court of Rome; or to the more obnoxious of the superstitions which its authority had sanctioned; the shield of Lancaster was over him. But through a considerable interval, previous to the meeting at Oxford in 1382, Wycliffe had extended his attacks from the politics to the doctrine of the hierarchy, and that in many particulars beside the point of the real presence. This distinction between the spiritual dogmas of the church, and the features of her external polity, had long been familiar to the laity of Europe; and the reformer's innovations upon the one, would not fail to alarm many of his contemporaries, who had been most sincere in his cause while concerning himself only with the other. Thus it was in general upon the the continent, and thus it long continued to be in England. To a solicitude for the independence of his country, the duke certainly added a respect for literature, and for good men; and from these causes alone, he might honestly favor the efforts, which were designed to secure some narrower limits to the empire of the popes. His second marriage, however, so plainly contracted, but to open his way to the monarchy which had been disgraced by Peter the cruel; and the nature of his subsequent connection with Catharine Swinford; are particulars in his history which cannot be ren-

dered pleasing. From these, and some other less prominent facts in the story of his life, it is but too certain that, however much the political creed of Wycliffe might commend itself to the mind of John of Gaunt, it was not the happiness of that distinguished nobleman to comply with the reformer's invariable maxims with respect either to morals or devotion. The rector of Lutterworth might oppose the secular ambition of the clergy with all the decision of Arnold of Bresia, or assail the idolatrous customs of the church with the severity of Vigilantius; but to inculcate the claims of the christian doctrine with the purity and earnestness of a primitive believer, was to proceed where a few only would follow.

It is at the same time greatly to the honor of the duke of Lancaster, that, disapproving as he did of the tenets of Wycliffe in relation to the eucharist, and unprepared as he was to follow out the plans of improvement proposed in the writings of that reformer, he continued to be known as an admirer of his character, and as the friend of his followers, and of their general doctrine. He had listened to the herald of the approaching change, in the faith and customs of Europe, with delightful interest; and if there were things which he was in no way disposed to relinquish, though denounced as unlawful, it was never his to forget the excellencies which he knew to be connected with what he discountenanced as error or impiety. More than once, subsequent to the year 1382, his authority was successfully employed in behalf of the persecuted; to his death, indeed, no man's life was the forfeiture incurred by his creed,

CHAP. V.

and among his latest acts, was a defence in the english parliament of the vernacular scriptures, as a property which no priesthood should be allowed to wrest from the people.[7]

It should also be remarked, that, had the reformed opinions been more fully adopted by Lancaster; it is difficult to perceive how his authority could have been rendered equal to the task, of saving the men who had embraced them from the meditated vengeance of their enemies. Richard, by his extravagance and his favoritism, and by connecting himself with the animosities which had been so unhappily prevalent from the commencement of his reign, had rendered himself almost dependent on the clergy. By the queen-mother, he may have been taught to think favourably of the character of Wycliffe; but alone he could never have withstood the enmity of the church, which would have been the certain consequence of his befriending the reformers. His uncle, of Lancaster, was the only statesman who could have afforded him any material aid in pursuing such a line of policy; and the malevolent rumours circulated with respect to him, had so far injured him both with the court and the people, as to render it improbable that even his influence would have been equal to such a crisis.[7] The king possessed neither the consistency, nor the energy, which at such a moment could alone inspire confidence; while a boisterous temper,

---

[7] Knighton, 2657. Lewis. c. v. All that may be said in favor of John of Gaunt has been elaborately adduced by his great admirer, Mr. Godwin. See the Life of Chaucer, ii. 219. 383—386. and elsewhere.

CHAP. V.

which seemed to forbode the coming disasters of the whole state, was constantly disclosing itself, both among the governing and the governed. But over all these circumstances, there was one Mind presiding, to whose infinite discernment it appeared well, that there should be in the regeneration of Christendom, as in the system of nature, a seed time, and a wintry interval, before the appearance of spring, and the abundance of harvest.

His efforts encouraged by other distinguished persons.

Nor was the duke of Lancaster the only distinguished person in the fourteenth century, who was known to be favorable to a reformation of the anglican church. His brother, of Gloucester, from the work dedicated to him, by the rector of Lutterworth, may be presumed to have been friendly to the zeal of the reformer, as directed against the evils which had been introduced into the ecclesiastical system, by the mendicants.[8] In the number of his friends, we also find the widow of the Black Prince, the mother of the youthful Richard,—a female, whose intellectual character, and known solicitude for the tranquillity of the nation, seemed to authorize that interference with the disputes of the period which is not unfrequent in her history. It is

[8] This MS. is preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Class c. Tab. 3. No. 12. It consists of about fifteen pages, and beside the part of it which presents a spirited summary of the debate, as it then stood, between the mendicants and their opponents, it treats considerably of theological opinions. The writer states among other things, that "God is "so good that in each goodness he is before, and in each evil he cometh "after the effect." It should be added that the discussion is said to have taken place in the presence of the duke; and that Knighton speaks of more than one person bearing that title, as among the friends of Wycliffe, "cum *ducibus* et comitibus." De Event. 2661.

CHAP. V.

conjectured, that her husband, toward the close of life, had regarded Lancaster with an eye of suspicion.[9] If so, the protection afforded to our reformer, while known to be under the peculiar patronage of John of Gaunt, is the more honorable to the mother of the sovereign, and to the object of her favor. The motives which led her to interpose, that no definite sentence might be passed on the opinions of Wycliffe, by the synod at Lambeth, are said to have induced an effort to create a regard for his character and doctrine in the mind of her son. But the feeble monarch began his career in too much dependence on the clergy; lending his name, and that in contempt of the constitution, to aid their measures of intolerance.

Anne of Bohemia.

His queen came to this country in 1382. She was daughter to the emperor, Charles the fourth, and sister to the king of Bohemia. By Wycliffe she is described as the sister of Cæsar, and as possessing the gospel written in three languages, Bohemian, German, and Latin; and the reformer enquires whether to "hereticate her on that "account, would not be luciferian folly."[10] Her removal from this world, in which but little repose was allotted to her, took place in 1394, and Arundel, the primate, noticing her loss, observes, that "although she was a stranger, yet she constantly "studied the four gospels in english, and ex- "plained by the expositions of the doctors; and "in the study of these, and reading of godly "books, she was more diligent than even the pre- "lates themselves, though their office and busi-

[9] Vol. i. 329. 360. [10] Lewis.

"ness require this of them."[11] The queen's connexion with Germany, and especially with Bohemia, may in some measure, explain this attachment to the vernacular scriptures. In Germany, the authority of the pontiffs had always to contend with the rival pretensions of the emperors; and with the less partial hostilities of sectaries, whom no persecution could destroy.

Sketch of the religious history of Bohemia.

It was not until toward the close of the ninth century, that the Bohemians began to renounce idolatry; and to adopt the language of the historians of their sufferings, when they "received "the first light of the gospel, the cross was "the concomitant of it, according to the will "of Christ, who, as he did establish the church "by his own blood, so he sprinkled it with the "blood of martyrs that it may be fruitful. This "is the council of divine wisdom that we may "hope in Christ, and not for the things of this life; "therefore the gospel cost the Bohemians some "of their blood."[12] The test of christian sincerity thus applied, arose in the first instance, from the resentment of such among them as still adhered to the ancient superstitions; and afterwards, from the obtrusive domination of the pontiffs. Nearly a century had passed since the

[11] Fox. Acts, &c.

[12] The following is the title of the book from which the materials of the above sketch are selected. "The History of the Bohemian Perse-"cution, from the beginning of their conversion to christianity in the "year 894 to the year 1632, Ferdinand the second, of Austria, reigning." The epistle "To the Godly Reader," is thus subscribed, "In our banish-"ment in the year 1632,.N. N. N. &c." The facts of the story related, were designed to improve an addition of the Acts and Monuments, and the Bohemian pastors state, that they were collected from their own writers, or supplied from observation. The work was printed in this country in 1650.

CHAP. V.

introduction of the gospel into that kingdom, when an effort was made to retain the use of the popular language in the offices of the church, and it was made successfully. But the privilege which one pope had conceded in 977, was prohibited in the the most imperative terms by another in 1179. So late, however, as the year 1197, an advocate of clerical celibacy among the Bohemians, had nearly forfeited his life, by his temerity in publicly abetting that perilous innovation; nor was it until the middle of the fourteenth century, that communion in one kind, became at all the practice of that people. Three of their reformers were contemporary with Wycliffe, and their names and opinions may be regarded as familiar to Anne of Bohemia.

Melice, the first of these, was a native of Prague, and of noble family. His powers as a preacher secured him a large auditory, and he, ere long, proceeded "to exhort the people unto a frequent "communion in both kinds; to complain much "of spiritual desolation; to rebuke divers abuses "and abominations, being much helped with the "godly endeavours of his faithful colleague, Con-"rade Strickna, a man eminent for learning and "eloquence." By their joint labours, considerable reformation is said to have been effected in the morals of the city. But Melice felt himself powerfully urged to visit Rome; and to lift up his voice of reproof, as in the presence of the power which had so desolated the church of God. With prayers, and tears, and fastings, he waited to ascertain, if possible, the real source of this propelling influence which he found it so

difficult to resist; and journeying at length to the seat of antichrist, he placarded the most obnoxious of his opinions on the houses of the principal ecclesiastics, and avowed them publicly. He was, of course, speedily apprehended, committed to prison, and condemned as a heretic. In 1366, however, his enemies are said to have consulted their personal safety, by releasing him; and his decease in 1374, was "five years after "the happy dissolution of his colleague Strickna." CHAP. V.

The cause of a purer christianity, it appears, was afterwards sustained, and with still more efficiency, by Matthias Janovius, who was also a native of Prague, but according to the historians before cited, he was generally called the Parisian, because he had passed nine years as a student in the university of Paris. The same writers state, that "he was confessor to Charles the fourth, and more "fervent and zealous than his predecessors, in de-"fending communion in both kinds. He wrote "many things as, Of the Life of a Christian, Of "Hypocrisy, Of Antichrist, Of the Frequent Re-"ceiving of the Sacrament of the Body and the "Blood of Christ. Histories tell us, that this "Parisian, together with some other learned "men, went to Charles, when promoted unto "kingly dignity, and requested him to call an "œcumenical council for the church's refor-"mation. But the king returned unto them this "answer; that it was not in his power, but that "it belonged unto the ghostly father, the pope of "Rome; and that, therefore, he would write in "their behalf, and intreat a council for them; "which after he had done, the pope was pro-

CHAP. V.

"voked, and did so importune him for the punish-
"ment of those rash and heretical men, that
"Charles being maddened with the authority of
"the pope, although he loved this Parisian much,
"commanded him to depart his kingdom; and
"though indeed he returned afterwards, yet led
"he the remainder of his life in private, dying
"in the year 1394, November 30th. Now Jano-
"vius being banished, the adversaries forbad
"and abolished communion in both kinds, not
"only in the church of Aix, but every where in
"Prague, and through the whole kingdom. So
"that the most constant among them could not
"celebrate and receive the sacrament after their
"accustomed manner, excepting in private houses,
"and after that in woods and caves, and there
"not without hazard of their lives and much per-
"secution. For they were set upon in the ways;
"plundered, beaten, and drowned in rivers; so
"that at length they were necessitated to go to-
"gether armed, and in strong companies; which
"from that time continued until the days of
"Huss. Letters patent, also, were extorted from
"Charles,—though Hajecius saith, they were sent
"to the prelates of his own accord,—wherein an
"inquisition is ordained, and punishment by fire
"determined to be inflicted upon those who de-
"part from the faith and ceremonies of the
"church of Rome. It is extant in Hajecius, and
"was proclaimed on the 18th of September, in
"the year 1376, of which this was the chief
"effect; that diligent care was afterwards had
"that none but the pope's creatures might be
"admitted into the places of magistracy and public

"offices who might serve as a bridle to restrain the commonalty. We find it also recorded, that this Parisian finding his death approaching, gave this comfort among others to his friends. 'The rage of the enemies of truth hath now prevailed against us, but this shall not be always, for an ignoble people shall arise without sword or power, over whom they shall not be able to prevail.'"

CHAP. V.

Such was the religious character of the Bohemians, a people with whom the queen of England had been principally connected previous to her appearance in this island as the consort of Richard. It is not altogether a mystery, therefore, that her viéws of religion should have been somewhat more enlightened than were generally adopted by persons of her rank,—or indeed by persons of any rank in that age. Her attendants, during a twelve years' residence in this country, were natives of her own; and such it appears as had participated in her religious feelings. The mind of Wycliffe was one with which the devout Bohemian could readily have sympathized; and it is certain that on the death of the queen, her attendants conveyed many of the writings of the english reformer to their home;[13] where they contributed much to prepare the oppressed for the struggle which ensued under Jerome and Huss, the illustrious successors of Melice, Strickna, and Janovius.

While the nearest connections of the sovereign, were thus interested in the character and doctrine

[13] Turner. Hist. v. 198. Hist. Bohem. Æneas Silvius, c. xxxv. 66.

CHAP. V.

of Wycliffe, it will be supposed that the reformer did not wholly fail of partisans among other privileged classes of his countrymen. It was, indeed, a matter of thankfulness with him, that "many "knights favored the gospel and had a mind to "read it in english;"[14] and it is the sincere lamentation of the orthodox Henry Knighton, that these "having a zeal for God, but not according to "knowledge, often surrounded the false preachers "with military bands, that they might not suffer "any reproaches or losses on account of their "profane doctrine." That such men, and their attendants should appear in arms was the custom of the age; and hardly worthy of that distinction would they have been, had they hesitated to employ their authority with a view to protect the men from reproach and losses, whom they were constrained to regard as worthy of far other treatment. To act but upon the defensive, was to deserve the praise of moderation. We have seen that so early as the year 1377, Lord Percy, the earl marshall, appeared with John of Gaunt before the synod at St. Paul's, to support the pretensions of the rector of Lutterworth. But the names which occur most frequently, as those of persons in the higher classes who favored the doctrine of the reformer, are Sir John Pecche, Sir Reginald Hilton, Sir John Trussel, Sir William Neville, Sir John Clenboun, Sir John Montague, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir Thomas Latimer, and Sir Richard Sturry.

The father of Sir John Pecche was a knight of Wormleighton, in Warwickshire. He had been

[14] MS. Hom. on Matt. xi. Bib. Reg.

warden of the Cinque Ports, and governor of Corfe Castle, and died in the last year of Edward the third. His son survived the rector of Lutterworth but two years. Sir Reginald Hilton is described as of Hilton, in the county palatine of Durham, and Sir John Trussel, as of Cubleston in Staffordshire. Sir William Neville was the third son of Ralph, lord Neville; Sir John Montague or Montacute, was brother to William de Montacute, earl Salisbury; the family of Sir John Clenboun is unknown. By certain of these noblemen, the images found in the churches subject to their patronage, are said to have been demolished;—a fact which suggests, that their attachment to Wycliffe arose from an approbation of his theological, as well as of his political creed. Sir Lewis Clifford was the younger son of Sir Roger Clifford, of Hert and Hertness, in the county of Durham. In 1385, he received the order of the garter, and he will be remembered as the messenger of the queen-mother to the synod at Lambeth, requiring a suspension of the process commenced against our reformer. Sir Thomas Latimer was the son of John le Latimer, of Brabroke, in Northamptonshire. Sir Richard Sturry was the advocate of the lollards in their appeal to the government in 1395; when his temerity is said to have been severely reprimanded by Richard.[15] CHAP. V.

[15] It is of the persons noticed above that Knighton thus writes: "Isti "erant hujus secte promotores strenuissimi, et propugnatores fortissimi: "qui militari cingulo ambiebant, ne a recte credentibus aliquid opprobrii "aut dampni propter eorum prophanam doctrinam sortirentur." De Event. Anglæ. 2601. Dugdale has collected the information respecting these friends of reform, which is given in the text. Baronage, i. ii. ubi

CHAP. V.

Through a series of ages the drawing up of testamentary documents was left to the taste or to policy of the clergy, and in such records the chief peculiarities of the established creed generally made their appearance. Hence it happened that the absence from such a document of appeals to the clemency of the Virgin, or of provision for masses after death, came to be regarded as indicating a repugnance to such tenets on the part of the deceased. Nor is it merely a negative evidence of this kind, which is sometimes supplied by such memorials. The influence of Wycliffe's teaching was frequently such as to induce his followers to discard the usual pomp of funerals, and to bestow their alms on the necessitous instead of adding to the opulence of the priesthood. Thus the will of Sir John Montague, dated 1338, requires "that a black cloth of wool (instead of a pall of "silk or velvet,) should be laid over his body and "about, as also within his hearse; and to cover "the ground should be cloth of russet, and white "to be distributed to poor people after the burial, "namely, as much as might make every poor "man a coat and a hood." Thus also, Sir Thomas Latimer, wholly omitting the usual donation for masses and month minds, enjoins "that there "be no manner of cost done about his burying,

supra. Of Sir John Montacute, the antiquarian writes that he "was one of "the chief of the sect of the lollards, and the greatest fanatic of them all, "being so transported with zeal, that he caused all the images that were in "the chapel at Schenele (Shenly in Buckinghamshire,) that had been there "set up by the ancestors of his wife, to be taken down and thrown into "obscure places, only the image of St. Catharine, in regard that many "did affect it, he gave leave that it should stand in his bakehouse." Baronage, i. 650.

"neither in meat, neither in drink, nor in any other "thing, unless it be to any such one as needeth it "after the law of God." Similar instructions are found in the will of Lewis Clifford, who in common with the knight last mentioned, commends his spirit "to the grace and the great mercy of "the Trinity;" though aware that the orthodox mode of disposing of the soul, was to commit it to the care of the Virgin and of all the saints. Some confessions of peculiar sinfulness made by these persons, have been interpreted as proofs of their penitence on account of the sanction which they had given to the heresies of Wycliffe. But such was the doctrine of that reformer respecting the extent of human depravity, that no man sincerely embracing it, would be found slow to confess himself "a false knight to God, and unworthy to be "called a christian man." [16]

Of the degree in which the opinions of the rector of Lutterworth were adopted by these distinguished persons, we cannot speak with precision; but it is certain, that their known favorable feeling was of no trivial service to his cause. The wealth of such men, also, was strictly necessary in the absence of printing, to effect any considerable multiplication of his writings; and their power which could alone awe the curious zeal of inquisitors, was no less important as the means of preserving such prohibited articles when obtained. Could it be shewn, therefore, that the knights of the fourteenth century, were few of them prepared to brave any very serious losses, in defence

[16] Ibid.

CHAP. V.

of a purer faith; it is certain that many of them were so far attached to good men, and to the principles of religious freedom, as to prove the means of saving those productions of the father of the reformation from oblivion, which alone enable us to place his conduct and opinions in their proper light. The volume in the library of the Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, containing as it does the most popular of the reformer's writings, and extending to more than three hundred pages, with double columns, closely written, is the work of one transcriber. The same is true of another volume, including nearly the same series of treatises, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Such labour could not have been procured without cost; nor is it easy to conceive how works so formidable, and forbidden under such penalties, should have been preserved through so long an interval, except we view them as being, for some generations, the property of the powerful. Had they become the possession of churchmen, they would have been committed to the flames, or have been deposited among the secreted articles which have sometimes found their place in collegiate libraries. But the reader will perceive from the catalogue of the reformer's manuscripts appended to this volume, that it is not from the treasures existing in cathedrals, that any material information is to be derived, respecting the history or the opinions of Wycliffe. His works, are ours, as the fruit of that mental independence, which began to distinguish the lay nobility, and the leaders of the commons in this country, before the disastrous accession of Henry the fourth. Nor is

it to be supposed, that the penalties were always inconsiderable, which were incurred by public men when they became known to the clergy as being to any extent the disciples of Wycliffe. The reverse is evident in the case of the duke of Lancaster, and of several others. But numbered with these early advocates of the reformed doctrines, and at the same time distinguished from them all by his heroic sufferings, is Sir John Oldcastle, a knight, who from the inheritance of his wife, obtained the name of lord Cobham, and who after earning the confidence of Henry the fourth, and of his successor, was doomed to perish at the stake as a peace-offering, supplied by the sovereign to appease the wrath of an intolerant priesthood. This illustrious martyr was contemporary with Wycliffe; but as the story of his wrongs relates to a period, considerably subsequent to the decease of our reformer, it will more properly claim our attention in the last chapter of this volume. CHAP. V.

Geoffrey Chaucer.

It was not without many appearances of propriety, that the early admirers of Wycliffe's character were accustomed to reckon the name of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of english poetry, with those of his disciples. The poet was a native of London, and about four years younger than the reformer. Among his earliest efforts had been a translation of the Roman de la Rose, a poem which satyrized the vices of the mendicants, with a freedom which must have been highly grateful to the rector of Lutterworth; and both these distinguished men, found their leading patron in John of Gaunt. It was reasonable to suppose, that Chaucer had embraced the doctrines which

CHAP. V.

called for the reformation of the church, to the degree in which they were adopted by Lancaster; and if some pieces fraught with protestant sentiments have been improperly attributed to him, there are others of unquestionable authenticity which place this fact beyond suspicion.[17] There is one circumstance, however, which is alone sufficient to prevent our regarding the author of the Canterbury Tales, as being in all respects, a disciple of Wycliffe; and one, the bearing of which, in this view, has not been adequately noticed. The reformer was scarcely more distinguished, from the age in which he lived, by the truth and sublimity of his religious doctrine, than by the purity of his maxims and of his feelings with relation to morals. Chaucer, too, has shewn that he could, in some measure, appreciate these features in his character. But in other instances he could dwell on licentious themes: could descend to play with them, and to extract amusement from them, in a manner which, in the judgment of Wycliffe, must have been seriously reprehensible.[18] With him to touch such matters, except for the purpose of loud and immediate rebuke, was not only to be exposed to infection, but to betray the interests of religion and of society. It should be remembered, also, that the poet speaks with reverence, even in his latest compositions, of transubstantiation, and of confession to a priest.[19] Few, however, are the evils, either in the church, or in the state of society to which the censure of Wycliffe was applied, which

[17] Godwin's Life of Chaucer, ubi supra.

[18] Dryden, with all his admiration of Chaucer's genius, knew not how to apologize for this feature of his writings. See Preface to his Fables.

[19] Ibid.

may not be found as the subject of satire or complaint in the poems of Chaucer. And if the same things are treated with more severity by the former writer, than by the latter, it is as the obvious consequence of his more adequate perception of the evil involved in that apostacy which had come upon the church, and which had shed its baneful influence over every portion of society in his day. As a faithful delineation of the manners of our ancestors in the fourteenth century, the works of Chaucer must ever be valuable; and notwithstanding his too frequent innovations on its purity, his labours certainly contributed much to give form and authority to the language of his country. CHAP. V.

But the celebrity of our father poet is not to be considered as arising, in any great degree, from such extrinsic causes. Chaucer has been frequently associated with Dante and Petrarch, though to modern readers, even among ourselves, his name is much more familiar than his writings. Reviewing his productions of a graver cast, it must be confessed, that, had his attention been limited to such themes, his fame would have been very much less than at present. His Parson's Tale has been sometimes noticed as probably suggested by the known excellencies of the rector of Lutterworth. But if it were so, there can hardly be a more striking proof of the writer's incapacity to describe, or even to understand, the more commanding elements of human character. The speaker is evidently one of those men, whose amiable qualities can hardly fail to be revered in a parish; but who has none of the power necessary to produce the smallest undulation on the surface of society, be-

CHAP. V.

yond that little boundary. Wycliffe, on the contrary, could unite with that religious condescension and activity which must win the affections of a village, the proofs of capacity which claimed the confidence of senates, and provoked the whole artillery of the papal power. Sublimity, either in thought or expression, was not the excellence of Chaucer. This must much rather be sought in his humorous notices of the manners of the age. The transition is as from slumber to wakefulness, the moment his narrative becomes embued with mirth or satire; and it may be regretted, that his vivacity and playfulness are commonly increased by coming in contact with impurity. The Knight's Tale, though a borrowed story, is so treated as to demonstrate the vigour of his fancy. His Troilus and Cresida would have been more beautiful and more popular, had its author known how to compress his pleasing theme; but the whole of the Canterbury Tales, and especially their prologue, should be attentively read by the student of poetry, who would form a complete estimate of Chaucer's genius.

Influence of poetry on the reformation of the church.

Of poetry in general, it has been frequently remarked, that its earliest strains were the offspring of devotion. It was thus with the descendants of Abraham: and among gentile nations, the harp would seem to have been first struck in honor of their gods. The drama itself was a creation of the greek mythology, and a part of their religious ritual; and it is curious to observe, that its reappearance in Europe was as an appendage to religion. In those scenic exhibitions, to which ecclesiastics were so much attached during the

season of Lent, the steps which issued in the creation or in the redemption of the world, and the most striking portions of scripture history, all of which their chroniclers had previously versified, were acted in detail. Such performances are still encouraged in catholic countries; and as they gradually passed into the hands of the lay minstrels, they became the vehicle of much wholesome satire on the manners of the clergy, and continued to be such until the age of the reformation. The troubadours, who united the office of the minstrel and the poet, and were in fact the bards of modern Europe, rose with the opening of the twelfth century. On many of these, considerable praise was bestowed by Dante and Petrarch; but their printed compositions have not equalled the anticipations, which the eulogies of such men were adapted to excite. It is probable that their pieces have in general suffered from translation; and greatly more, by losing that accompaniment of the voice and instrument, to which they were no doubt adjusted with considerable ingenuity. To the troubadours much licence was conceded in handling the weapons of satire; and while some of them sung with delight the downfall of heresy, others, and even a greater number, were no less disposed to lash the vices, and question the pretensions of the accredited priesthood.[20] A distinguished living

CHAP. V.

[20] The following is a specimen of the manner in which the catholic troubadour was accustomed to address the heretics of his day: "See now "heretic if thou dost not commit an infamous perfidy; thou liest like a "robber, and thou art in truth the thief of souls. If thou refusest to be- "lieve, behold the fire which is burning thy companions ready to con- "sume thee. What, still indocile? thou wilt not yield! But the flames "and the torture await thee, and thou art going to experience them.

CHAP. V.

writer has remarked of the tedious collections made by Millot from this class of men, that "they "will always be useful to the enquirer into the "manners and opinions of the middle ages, from "the numerous illustrations which they contain "of two general facts,—the extreme dissoluteness "of morals in the high ranks,—and the prevailing "animosity of all classes against the clergy."[21] What is thus stated of the poems of the troubadours, is equally true of the romances of chivalry.

The Roman de la Rose.

To the latter class of compositions, as its name imports, belongs the Roman de la Rose. This poem, which reached the alarming extent of twenty thousand verses, was the joint production of William de Lorris, and John de Meun; and was com-

"God ought to punish thee in hell worse than the demons. Before "thou art delivered up to the flames, as thou will be if thou dost not "retract, I wish to ask thee, &c. Whoever does not believe these things "ought not to complain if he be seized and burnt. Every country where "thy perfidious doctrine has been spread ought to be swallowed up. Un-"less thou confessest instantly, the fire is already lighted; thou shalt be "proclaimed by trumpet through the city, and the people will assemble "to see thee burnt." Hist. Troub. p.p. 48. 49. 52. 57. 59. 60. But this merciless wrath was fitted to produce a re-action of violence. The following is from the pen of a writer of the same order, who had witnessed the massacres of Toulouse: "I know they wish me ill because I have "made a sirvente against the false tribe of Rome, the source of all de-"cline. I am not astonished that the world is full of error. It is deceit-"ful Rome which soweth it with trouble and war. Your covetousness "blind you, you shear the wool of your sheep too close. If my prayers "could be heard I would bruise your beak. Rome, in whom all the "Greek is found! Rome of evil manners and of evil faith, who has made "so great a carnage, who has established her seat at the bottom of the "abyss of perdition; may God never pardon you your pilgrimage to "Avignon. Without a cause have you put innumerable people to death. "May the demons carry you to the fire of hell." Ibid. 449—451. The writer giving publicity to such sentiments, must have been aware that they were not peculiar to himself. See Turner's Hist. i. 447, 448.

[21] Hallam's View of Society, &c.

pleted, a little before the close of the thirteenth century. The work is an elaborate allegory; and notwithstanding some puerile conceits, which occur both in the structure and in the details of the story, and some other defects, it is one of no ordinary merit, whether viewed in connexion with the age that produced it, or with the inventions of the same class by which it was preceded. The master passion in the tale is love; and this, together with every abstract quality which might be supposed to retard or facilitate the possession of its object, the writer has personified. When the untaught genius of Bunyan, conferred so much dramatic attraction on the same species of machinery, he was doubtless ignorant of the work of de Lorris, and probably of its various imitations. But Thompson possessed them all as his models, when lavishing his refinement and power on "The Castle of Indolence." It is somewhat more than the latter half of the Roman de la Rose, which is attributed to John de Meun; and though the former portion of the work is described as possessing most of poetical feeling and animation, the remaining is no less worthy of notice in this place, since in some of its parts, it more directly illustrates the religion of the period.[22]

CHAP. V.

A dispute had sometime since arisen between the mendicant orders, respecting the latitude in which their vows of poverty should be interpreted. By a numerous party, a papal bull was procured, empowering them to build convents,

[22] Godwin's Chaucer, ii. c. i. 2.

CHAP. V.

and furnish them, on condition that such property should belong to the see of Rome, so as to be disposed of at the pleasure of the pontiffs. But this, the more severe, or as they were afterwards called the more spiritual, considered as a violation of their rule, and as an opening to every abuse which had so long disgraced the monastic establishments. Aided by the prophetic genius of the abbot Joachim, these spiritual controversialists discovered their founder, St. Francis, in the angel described in the Apocalypse, as flying through the midst of heaven, bearing the everlasting gospel. Charmed with this new light, the general theory of the Calabrian prophet was presently adopted; and it was boldly affirmed, that three dispensations of religion were appointed to the world; the first being that of the Old Testament, and proceeding from the Father; the second, that of the New, which had proceeded from the Son; and the last, that of the everlasting gospel, which after the year 1260, would be found to proceed from the Holy Ghost. This gospel, Joachim had been inspired to write, and the surpassing blessedness of the new economy, was to be introduced by the labours of the spiritual brotherhood, as being alone the disciples of evangelical poverty.[23]

St. Amour.

In publishing these dogmas, the mendicants found their principal antagonist in the celebrated

[23] Mosheim. iii. 209—211. Cave, Hist. Lit. Art. Joachimus. The prophecies of Joachim have been frequently printed on the continent. And down to very recent times they appear to have possessed considerable influence over the mind of the visionary, and to have been sometimes treated with respect by persons of another class. See Mosheim, iii. 238. 289.

William de St. Amour, who, in his memorable work entitled, De Periculis Novissimorum, Temporum, describes them as constituting the man of sin foretold by St. Paul. Of this treatise an abstract is interwoven by John de Meun, in the Roman de la Rose. There are two points which are urged with peculiar emphasis by both writers. "First, the conduct of these friars in insinuating "themselves into the houses of individuals, hearing "their confessions, giving them absolution, and "seducing them from their spiritual pastors and "bishops, under whose care and superintendence, "the established order of the christian hierarchy "had placed them. John de Meun alleges, in "a satirical manner, that the friars are very little "disposed to exercise their powers of edification "upon the poor, but that they confine themselves "to the eminent, the powerful, and the wealthy. "They urge, he says, in vindication of this con- "duct, that such men are more exposed to the "temptations of the world, have more sins to "answer for, and therefore stand in more urgent "need of spiritual assistance. The other point "very elaborately treated against the mendicants, "is their idleness, and their mode of subsisting "upon the earnings of men more industrious than "themselves. The friars alleged that Christ and "his apostles lived in the same manner, wan- "derers upon the face of the earth, and without "visible means of subsistence. But against this, "their opponents urged certain texts of St. Paul, "in which he recommends to his followers to "work with their own hands, and appeals to "those he taught, whether at any time he ac-

CHAP. V.

CHAP. V.

"cepted any man's silver or gold. St. Augustine "is also quoted to prove that devotion has by no "means so exclusive a claim upon us, as to su- "persede the exercise of secular industry."[24]

The evils stated in this extract, will be remembered as those which provoked the displeasure of Wycliffe; and the reasonings opposed to them are precisely such as are of constant occurrence in his writings. So loud, however, and so general was the condemnation of the eternal gospel, that Alexander the fourth judged it well to order its suppression. This decision of the pontiff called forth an embassy in the following year, with Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas at its head; and it was granted, that a sentence of banishment should be immediately pronounced against their adversary, St. Amour, and that his obnoxious work should be burnt as heretical, by the public executioner. But on the death of Alexander, the exile returned to Paris, and, protected by the university, he continued his attacks on the authors of his disgrace, to the close of his life. The popularity of the Roman de la Rose, from the period of its appearance to the age of Luther, if we consider many of its features, is truly surprising; and as including the substance of the controversy, which so powerfully attracted St. Amour and Wycliffe, its influence on the approaching reformation was not trivial. By the early reformers, its celebrity was regarded with exultation; while among the more zealous of the Romanists, it was the object of peculiar abhor-

[24] Godwin's Chaucer, ii. c. 2.

rence. Gerson, whose name is of such frequent occurrence in the history of the council of Constance, affirmed before that assembly, that unless he could suppose that the author of that composition had lived to repent of his labour, he would no more pray for his soul than for that of Judas.[25]

That Chaucer had laboured to render so obnoxious a book more generally known, would be sufficient to excite the suspicions of the orthodox, and to induce the reformers to number him with their friends. In addition to which, no small portion of the materials found in his own productions, was evidently derived from that work; and those corruptions of the ecclesiastical system, which the Roman de la Rose tended so deeply to unveil, are assailed with equal freedom in the Canterbury Tales. Thus the story of the Sompnoure, describes the practices of the mendicants, as supplying to the infernal regions the larger portion of its inhabitants; reserving its foulest locality for swarms of friars. Whether preaching in the church, the castle, or the cottage, or performing the function of confessors at the bedside of the sick, their religion is viewed as a mere craft; in which fables, falsehood, and cruelty, are made to subserve the schemes of avarice, and of the lowest sensuality. The Pardoner's Tale, is a farther exhibition of the same species of artifice. His favorite text is, that the love of money is the root of evil, and it is at the same time his steady policy to increase his store, by the abuse of every fear which the popular super-

[25] Ibid.

CHAP. V.

stition might be made to excite. While such is the character, which the pardoner is made to give of himself: and which the Sompnoure affirms of the mendicant: the friar in his turn asserts equal villanies to be the every-day practice of his accuser. It was the office of the Sompnoure to cite all persons who were accused of irreligion or of immoral conduct before the spiritual courts, and to enforce the penalties awarded on the guilty by those tribunals. In the performance of these things, the most odious instances of injustice and oppression are said to arise; and the jurisdiction of the prelates is described, as involving corruptions which fully warrant, the indignant complaints of Wycliffe respecting it.[26] It is certain that Chaucer would hardly have employed the whole strength of his genius in completing these and similar portraits, had he not known that with many of his contemporaries their truth would be speedily recognised. And if

[26] See the Canterbury Tales. The poet who states in his prologue that,

> In stede of weping and praieres,
> Men mote give silver to the pour freres,

thus describes the pardoner,

> But of this craft fro Berwick unto Ware,
> Ne was ther swiche an other pardonere;—
> For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,
> Which as he saide was our Ladies viel
> He saide he hadde a gobbet of the seyl
> Thatte Seint Peter hadde, when that he went
> Upon the see till Jesu Christ him kent:
> He had a cross of laton full of stones,
> And in a glass he hadde pigges bones,
> But with these relikes, whanne that he found
> A pour person dwelling up on lond,
> Upon a *day* he gat him more money
> Than that the parson gat in *monthes tweie;*
> And thus with fained flattering and japes
> He made the persone and the people his apes.

such tyranny and fraud were really prevalent; was it not proper that the guilty, and even those who could descend to screen the guilty from punishment, should be held up to public execration? But to do this, was to assail the foundations of the papal authority which had long been as the shield of Achilles to the whole. CHAP. V.

Nor was Chaucer alone, in employing the language of poetry to satirize the disorders of the church. It was about the year 1350, when he had but recently passed his minority, that the poem called the Visions of Peirce Plowman, was written. Robert Longland, a priest, and a native of Salop is regarded as its author; and with the allegorical character of the piece, the poet has contrived to interweave some bold censures of the prevalent vices, but especially of those allied to superstition, or observable in the ecclesiastical orders. Chaucer's best compositions of this class were subsequent to the decease of Wycliffe; Longland, may be described as his precursor. Six years had passed since the publishing of the Visions of Peirce Plowman, when the reformer's first treatise, intitled, "The Last Age of the Church," was written. Men had previously arisen, who had opposed the same weapons to the same evils, but their intrepidity and genius were greatly surpassed by Longland. It is probable that he found an early grave, and similar as were many of his sentiments to those of Wycliffe, he would, perhaps, have shrunk from the daring measures recommended by him, as the only means of expelling the corruptions which they had agreed to deplore. It is certain that the Notice of Longland

CHAP. V.

veneration conferred on the poetry of Longland by the lollards, was the principal cause of its preservation. He had foretold the approaching reformation with a distinctness, which astonished and delighted the men of a later age; and while the patriot, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist, have since united to perpetuate his fame, the partisans of superstition and of despotism have not failed to honor him with their peculiar enmity. So popular were the Visions of the Plowman, that other compositions make their appearance at intervals under the same title. Hence, we have not only the Visions of the Plowman, but the Plowman's Creed and the Plowman's Tale. The authors of the latter productions are unknown; but from the age of Longland, the name of such pieces was sufficient to prepare the reader for an exposure of clerical delinquency, and a bold utterance of the language of reform.[37]

[37] See Warton's History of Poetry, i. sect. 8, 9. and Godwin's Chaucer.

CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER OF WYCLIFFE'S DISCIPLES——THE LOLLARDS CONSISTED OF TWO CLASSES——NOTICE OF JOHN OF NORTHAMPTON——PROSPECTS OF THE REFORMERS UNDER RICHARD THE SECOND——TESTIMONY OF KNIGHTON RESPECTING THE NUMBER AND THE CHARACTER OF WYCLIFFE'S FOLLOWERS——ANALYSIS OF THE PLOWMAN'S TALE——THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE DISCIPLES OF WYCLIFFE——CHARACTER OF HIS "POOR PRIESTS"——ANALYSIS OF THE TRACT "WHY POOR PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES"——NOTICE OF WILLIAM THORP.

Number of Wycliffe's disciples.

THE existence of such literature as we have seen to be connected with the names of Longland and Chaucer, discloses an important feature in the state of society during their time. If we consider the supply as at all regulated by the demand, it follows, that, among our ancestors of the fourteenth century, the friends to ecclesiastical reform constituted a formidable body, both in numbers and intelligence. These, however, as in the case of the writers above named, were not always to be viewed as receiving the entire doctrine of Wycliffe. If by the term lollard, be meant, not only those who had embraced every important principle avowed by our reformer, but those also, who without proceeding to such lengths, were known to echo many of his complaints, we may, perhaps, safely conclude with Knighton, that in the year 1382, every second man in the kingdom was of that sect.[1] At such a crisis, to

They consisted of two classes.

[1] De Eventibus Angliæ. ad ann.

CHAP. VII.

adopt any portion of the language distinguishing the disciples of the rector of Lutterworth, would be in general to incur the reproach of having given equal credence to the most obnoxious of his doctrines. Hence it sometimes happened, that the men who were loud in their censures of some branches of papal and prelatical encroachment, were equally signalised as the persecutors of such as were known to hold certain opinions of Wycliffe. To persons who were anxious to obtain the praise of moderation and superior discernment, there remained scarcely any other mode of placing their general orthodoxy beyond suspicion, and in many cases even this was insufficient.

Notice of John of Northampton.

Among the more decided adherents, both to the political and the religious creed of our reformer, a place should be given to John of Northampton. This opulent citizen, while mayor of London in 1382, braved the displeasure of the clergy, by invading the province of their spiritual courts; and he is described by Walsingham, as a lollard. Those improved notions of government, which in every state had been found to keep pace with the progress of its cities and its commerce, were eagerly embraced by the inhabitants of the english metropolis. A new power, indeed, had arisen in the community, and one, the strength of which, the elder authorities were obliged to feel once and again, before they could learn to credit its existence. The baron was rapidly ceasing to be the only ruler, and every gradation of modern society was beginning to appear. This is strikingly obvious from the measures of John of Northampton, and from that popular feeling in

the absence of which, to have entertained them for a moment, would have been a weakness foreign to his character. He not only complained of neglect on the part of the clergy, considered as the appointed guardians of the public morals; but accused them of a covetousness which had frequently led them to compound with the most notorious offenders; affirming, at the same time, that unless some wholesome severities were resorted to, the dissolute practices which became daily more prevalent through the city, must be found to bring the displeasure of Heaven upon its inhabitants and upon the nation. Accordingly, as chief magistrate of the capital, he seized on some of the more vicious persons of both sexes, and depriving them of their hair, ordered them to be led in procession through the streets, as in cases of theft. The bishop and his dependents stormed at this instrusion on the sphere of their acknowledged jurisdiction: but their wrath was fruitless. In the following year, Northampton was re-elected, and through both periods of office, failed not to render himself the terror of the licentious in a licentious age. He was, no doubt, fully aware of being supported by the more reputable portion of his fellow citizens; and their joint conduct is described by Walsingham, as the effec of that spirit of insolence, presumption, and heresy, which had long characterized the Londoners, and which had scattered its infection over other cities.[2]

CHAP. VI.

[2] Walsingham, Hist. 1382. Knighton, ad ann. Stowe's Survey of London. Godwin's Chaucer, c. 49.

CHAP. VI.

Prospects of the reformers at this crisis.

It is mostly from expressions thus loose and general, that we have to infer the state of the protestant doctrine in our cities before the accession of the house of Lancaster. We know, indeed, that the tenets which affirmed the necessity of a reform in the church were more or less known to all classes; and that while various opinions were very naturally entertained, as to the extent in which the proposed change was desirable; the majority of the nation, would, probably, have acquiesced in a revolution quite as matured as that accomplished by Henry the eighth, rather than submit to a continuance of the evils which all parties had so often professed to abhor. Nor is it, perhaps, too much to assert, that a prince capable of securing the attachment of the people might, at this crisis, have put the strength of the papal power at defiance, and have controuled the national priesthood at pleasure. They were but few, indeed, among the clergy, who had hitherto betrayed a disposition favorable to the opinions of Wycliffe. But unsupported by the majority, and certainly by the intelligence of the nation, as in the supposed case they would speedily have been, we may presume that the firmness of most of them would soon have yielded to the current. Such, at least, has been the pliancy of the same order of men in later times. The ease with which the proudest members of the hierarchy were humbled by Edward the first, and that while scarcely a spark of the religion of protestants illumined the darkness, and before the papacy had suffered any material diminution of its power, is a fact among many, conferring no

little plausibility on this opinion. Oxford was the centre, from which the sentiments of Wycliffe had emanated to the different quarters of the kingdom; and though the court and the hierarchy, were after a while united in the effort to exclude his doctrine from that seminary, it was only with a partial measure of success. Previous to the reformer's exclusion from that university, the majority of the students appear to have been prepared for the adoption of a more scriptural creed; and favored in this respect by the national authorities, or even left to themselves, they would ere long have given a strictly protestant character to that important establishment. The study of the ancient classics, was indeed revived considerably toward the opening of the sixteenth century; but it may be safely credited, that the capacity of judging on the questions of legislation and religion, evinced by the educated classes, and by a large portion of the people of this country before the death of Richard the second, was far from being regained when the english sceptre passed into the hands of Henry the eighth. That interval was one of some hopeful changes on the continent, but in this kingdom things had been fearfully retrogade; and had not the seed time under Edward the third and his successor been so devoutly improved, the return of favorable influences from above, would not so suddenly have ripened the surface into fruitfulness and harvest.

Testimony of Knighton respecting the number and character of Wycliffe's disciples.

The language of Knighton, with respect to the number of Wycliffe's disciples, is somewhat more definite than that of Walsingham. It is that also of a contemporary, and though to be admitted but

CHAP. VI.

with various modifications, is too important to be passed over. In the year 1382, he remarks of the followers of the rector of Lutterworth, that "their number very much increased, and that, "starting like saplings, from the root of a tree, "they were multiplied, and filled every place "within the compass of the land."[3] So far, indeed, had they prevailed, as to bring over to their sect the greater part of the people. A concession to the same effect is reluctantly made by Sir Thomas More. It must, at the same time, be remembered that Knighton, whose information even on contemporary topics is often strangely imperfect, resided in Leicester, and within that diocese to which the labours of Wycliffe and of his assistants were chiefly devoted. What the historian has more than once affirmed with respect to the whole kingdom, was no doubt true with respect to that division of it. But while within those limits, the larger portion of the people were more or less attached to the doctrines of reform, it would appear from such records in the diocesan registers as relate to the subsequent persecutions, that persons of this character were more thinly scattered over other parts of the land. Still, in every city and town, there were those by whom such opinions were understood and revered, and from such localities the leaven was variously extended to the mass of the people.[4]

The same historian, in attempting to account for this fact, which he deplores as the most evil

[3] De Eventibus Angliæ, ad ann.

[4] Lewis, c. x. See also Chap. IX. of this volume; and Fox, ubi supra.

feature of the times, has remarked that the sectarian teachers "always pretended in their discourses to have a great respect for the law "of God, or, as they expressed themselves, *goddis* "*law*, to which they avowed themselves as "strictly conformed both in their opinions and "their conduct." The effect of this appeal to the scriptures, as opposed to that rival authority which had been assumed by the church, is said to be, that a great many well-meaning people were deluded, and were induced to unite with the innovators, lest they should seem to be enemies to the law of God. This writer has also attempted to describe the character of the new sectaries, and his statements, though but partially true, and in some respects contradictory, are deserving of notice. It may be correct, that "like their master, they were too eloquent, and "too much for other people, in all contentions "by word of mouth; that mighty in words, they "exceeded all men in making speeches, but "talking every one in litigious disputations." So marked also was the contrast between the christianity of the scriptures, now first disclosed to these persons, and that which was seen under the sanction of the papal power, that we are not in any measure surprised to find that "both men and "women, though never so lately converted to "this sect, were distinguished by the same modes "of speech, and by a wonderful agreement in the "same opinions." Novel, as the event appeared, the light introduced rendered the impurities which the darkness had concealed so far visible, as to have precisely this effect, except indeed,

CHAP. VI.

CHAP. VI.

where the influence of prejudice, the power of which is commonly derived from a regard to some selfish interest, was such as to produce its wonted evasion of evidence. But when the historian proceeds to describe this people, as remarkable for "a proud and warlike disposition, and as re- "sembling the disciples of Mahomet, more than "the followers of Christ," it is not difficult to determine the degree of credit which should be attached to his assertions. It was among the sins frequently imputed to them, that they discountenanced war, and questioned even the right of the magistrate to take away life; while the utmost of their claims at any period, was, that the civil power should protect them in their persons and property, and that their religious peculiarities should be affected by the authority of the ruling church, but as its injunctions should be accompanied by reason and persuasion, these being the only legitimate means of opposing error or establishing truth. Indeed, from the above statements of the canon of Leicester, it is abundantly evident that the sufficiency of the christian scriptures, and the right of private judgment, constituted the foundation of the edifice which the followers of Wycliffe laboured to erect; and their acknowledged adroitness in debate, forcibly suggests what species of weapon it was in which they confided for success when employed in defending it.

But there are other sources of information respecting the character of Wycliffe's disciples, which are more worthy of confidence, and in every view more satisfactory. The poem called

CHAP. VI.

Analysis of the Plowman's Tale.

The Plowman's Tale, was written before the death of Richard the second, and perhaps before that of our reformer. It is valuable, because plainly intended to embody the points of controversy, between the lollards and the orthodox; and to illustrate the manner, in which they were accustomed to advocate their respective tenets. The production consists of a dialogue between a Griffin and a Pelican, the latter representing the true church, who, like her Lord, has been called to nourish her offspring with her blood; the former, serving as the emblem of the hierarchy, because strong, soaring, and oppressive. In the conclusion a struggle ensues, during which, a Phœnix appears, in aid of the defenceless Pelican, and completely destroys her antagonist with a host of foul birds collected as allies. The plowman having finished his narrative, observes that he is not to be considered as a party to the quarrel described, but simply as giving a faithful report of its progress and result.

"The pelican who
To these lollers ylaid his lure,"

commences with a characteristic praise of meekness, and of mercy, as enjoined above all things in the gospel; and as especially commended by the example of Christ, whose favorite emblem was accordingly the lamb. As the Saviour was in this world, so it is contended his accredited successors should be, contemptuous of worldly honor and of worldly gain; and the clergy who yield to opposite propensities, are viewed as traitors to Christ, and as doomed to fall low as Lucifer. It is the matter of sorrowful complaint, that while

CHAP. VI.

some would be higher than the emperor, others must exchange the friar's garb and staff for the dress and the implements of the soldier; and that many, to maintain a state of luxurious splendour, resembling, or even surpassing that of princes, could descend, and with all the regularity of habit, to numberless acts of oppression and fraud. Yet while thus bearing all the marks of antichrist, to suggest concerning some of them, that they were even liable to sin, was to be in danger of destruction. By the doctrine of the pope's supremacy also, the commandments of God are said to have been stripped of their authority, and Christ himself to have become the Head of the church in name only. The profaneness of ecclesiastics is next reproved, and particularly their simony; and while the latter affected every department of the hierarchy, their known proneness to debauchery is noticed as extending the worst of evils to many a domestic circle. Notwithstanding the prevalence of such intrigues, the same vices in the laity, were sometimes visited with the severest penalties in the spiritual courts. It was at the same time unblushingly affirmed by these holy culprits, that, unless confession of sin should be made to them, its remission must be foregone for ever. But the supposition that the authority claimed by the doctrine of the keys, was really entrusted to such victims of sensuality; or to others, who, if free from that species of vice, were men of the feeblest perceptions; or to a third class, who without being chargeable with lust or incapacity, frequently added the pride of Alexander to the cruelty of Nero, is treated with

powerfull scorn. In resorting to the use of that carnal sword which Peter was forbidden to employ, and in abusing that which was committed to him but in common with his brethren; the pontiffs are described as invading every security conferred by the laws, either on the property, or on the persons of englishmen. The assent of the commonalty, is declared to be necessary to every measure of taxation; but the pope, who obtained his elevation from the emperor, ere long to become his superior, is regarded as viewing the power of the english constitution in the light of a rival authority; and the king and the lords are admonished to bear this in mind, and to prove the shield of the nation against the meditated encroachments of a merciless despotism.[5] Enumerating the many expedients of the priesthood to gratify their avarice, the worship of images, and the miracles falsely attributed to them are not overlooked; and passing from the corruptions of the mendicant orders, and of the secular clergy, the same species of complaint is extended to the monastic societies, who are considered as equally

[5] The king ne taketh nat his men
But by assent of the comminalte;
But these eche yere not raunsom hem
Maisterfully, more than dothe he. 2595.

Wonder is that the parliamente
And al the lordes of this londe,
Hereto taken no lite entente
To help the people out of hir honde
For they ben harder in hir bonde
Worse bete, and crueller ybrende
Thou to the king is understonde;
God him help this for to amende! 2630.

CHAP. VI.

removed from the requirements of scripture and from the ancient spirit of their institute. To this series of objections, the advocates of the hierarchy are made to reply with indignation, that, were the papal supremacy to be destroyed, the church could have neither head nor order; that to deprive the ecclesiastical body of its wealth, must be of necessity to render the ministers of religion contemptible; and that as the Creator is assuredly the highest of all sovereigns, his worship should be accompanied by every external splendour that wealth or genius may bring to it. But it is affirmed in return, that Christ is, and is alone, the Head of the church; that he has furthermore prohibited his disciples from acknowledging any other master on earth; and that the costly appendages of christian worship should be rather sought in the state of the mind, in the justice of its principles, in charity, poverty of spirit, hope in God, and a pure conscience. These enlightened sentiments are despised as the cant of a faction, whose activities are purely the result of envy, covetousness, and a thirst for anarchy; and it is boisterously asserted, that each man should deem it enough to live devoutly himself, and "let other "men live as they list." But the tenets thus assailed are repeated, and with a deeper emphasis; and the anathema, the stake, and the gallows, are passionately named, as constituting the only kind of argument, which shall henceforth be employed to extirpate these pestilent heresies. The heresiarch calmly replies, that the curse of Nero was not more pointless than is that of churchmen in such a cause; adding, that to suffer

for the sake of the gospel, has ever been the lot of its truest disciples.[6] CHAP. VI.

Such is the substance of the Plowman's Tale, a work throughout which, there is that constant reference to scripture injunction, and to scripture precedent, which distinguished the mode of warfare adopted by the followers of Wycliffe; and which so generally confounded their adversaries, as to leave them no hope of preserving their authority, except by the aid of brute force. Nor is the degree of improvement, which the theology connected with these principles of reform exhibited, wholly a matter of conjecture. In all the maxims stated above, we perceive a direct tendency to separate religion from the influence by which it had been so greatly corrupted. While distinguishing so wisely between the formalities of superstition, and the nature of a religion founded on principle, and having its home in the affections; they are expressive of an equal solicitude to call off the reliance of men from the supposed power of the priesthood, with respect to their spiritual destinies. But the wisdom of attempting to destroy that false confidence which superstition had created, may be seriously questioned, unless accompanied by an effort to make known that better foundation of hope, which is revealed

[6] See Chaucer's Works. The Plowman's Crede describes an enquirer as seeking religious advice from the four orders of friars, and as becoming disgusted on witnessing the practice of those vices in their several convents, which were commonly imputed to them. He next meets with a plowman, who confirms all his impressions respecting the hypocrisies of the religious orders, and instructs him in the doctrine of the reformers. See Warton, i. sect. ix.

CHAP. LVI.

in the gospel." Nor can the reformers of the fourteenth century be charged with a want of attention to this fact. On the contrary, with their attacks on the delusive theories of the age, respecting the mode of securing pardon and the favor of Heaven, they were careful to unite an appeal to the scriptural doctrine of a free remission, in virtue of his mediation who has redeemed the church of God by his own blood.

Theological opinions of the disciples of Wycliffe.

The theological opinions of Wycliffe are known, and it is certain that these, which were in substance the creed of the poor priests, his coadjutors, were widely disseminated by the activities of those devoted men. It may be added, also, that the reformer frequently speaks of his contemporaries in a manner which discovers that many, on receiving his general doctrine, became in his judgment better men in the feelings which belong to the nature of piety, as well as in their sense of equity and of social obligation. Accordingly, the most devout of his doctrines, are very rarely noticed as though peculiar to himself, but rather as maintained by him in common with "many true men."

Character of his poor priests.

"The motives which render us curious to possess whatever may be known with respect to the character of Wycliffe's disciples, must impart a degree of interest to such particulars as may be ascertained concerning the persons to whom we have often referred under the name of poor priests, and of whom the rector of Lutterworth frequently writes in terms of high commendation. From the preamble to the persecuting law so dishonestly obtained by Courtney in 1382, it appears

that these laborious teachers were accustomed to journey from town to town, and from county to county: that, clothed in habits of peculiar simplicity, and without any licence from the local ordinaries, it was their manner to preach their doctrine openly, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in the midst of markets and fairs, and indeed in all places where multitudes were convened. When cited by their ecclesiastical superiors to answer before them, on account of these disorders, they are described as treating the authority claimed by such officers with contempt. The alternative that would be submitted to them on appearing before such a tribunal, they well knew to be silence or imprisonment; and as the accused were under no apprehension of evil as resulting from those spiritual anathemas which their conduct might incur, it was natural, that a summons from such quarters should be rarely obeyed. In the same document it is stated, that "by their subtle and ingenious words, they contrived to draw the people to their sermons, and to maintain them in their "errors," from which it appears that the new preachers were generally popular. It was to give some explanation of these novel facts, and to counteract the design of the inquisitorial statute which had been founded upon them, that Wycliffe published his tract on the question "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices?" A brief analysis of this treatise will place the character of the men to whom it relates distinctly before us. Three reasons are assigned for their refusal of benefices. First, the dread of simony; se-

CHAP. VI.

Analysis of the tract "Why poor priests have no benefices."

CHAP. VI.

condly, the fear of mispending poor men's goods; and thirdly, the hope of doing more good by itinerant labours, than by limiting their exertions to a single parish.

The customs connected with the system of patronage are said to be such, that whether an appointment to a benefice proceed from a prelate, or from a secular lord, the demands usually made on the incumbent, are of a description which must expose him to the guilt of simony. To prelates, he must render the first fruits, and many other unlawful contributions; or he must descend to hold some worldly office, inconsistent with the life of a priest, and far from being taught by the example of Christ, or of his apostles. Men who feel no scruple in conforming to these corruptions, however vicious or incompetent, may obtain with ease the care of many thousand souls; "but if "there be any simple man who desireth to live "well, and to teach truly the law of God, he "shall be deemed a hypocrite, a new teacher, "a heretic, and not suffered to come to any bene- "fice. If in any little poor place, he shall live "a poor life, he shall be so persecuted and slan- "dered, that he shall be put out by wiles, hex- "tortions, frauds, and worldly violence, and im- "prisoned or burnt." While such was the treatment experienced by the enlightened and conscientious clergyman, though receiving his appointment from the prelacy, lay patrons will not be supposed to have been less affected by the maxims of avarice and irreligion. It is observed that "some lords to cover their simony, will not "take for themselves, but kerchiefs for the lady,

"or a palfry, or a tun of wine. And when some "lords would present a good man, then some "ladies are the means of having a dancer pre- "sented, or a triper on tapits, or a hunter, or a "hawker, or a wild player of summer gambols." These practices are all denounced as treason against God; first, in the case of prelates and lords, who by selecting such men, betray their trust, and become the vicars of Satan; secondly, in the instance of curates, who comply with such customs, and who, beginning their career in treachery with respect to their Maker, are not likely to prove faithful in the obligations which relate to society; and finally, in the case of confessors who fail honestly to censure such evils, "lest they should give offence, and thereby lose "their friendships and gifts." One reason, therefore, why poor priests have no benefices, is, that it was scarcely possible to accept of them without variously contracting the guilt of simony.

The second reason of their conduct in this particular, was the fear of being compelled to mispend poor men's goods. Whatever of clerical revenue be left, after food and clothing are provided, is said to come under this denomination. But to be inducted to a living, much gold must be given to a gradation of ecclesiastical officers; and afterwards, many rich entertainments must be made, sometimes for the gratification of lay patrons, and sometimes as a duty owing to the higher clergy when performing their feigned visitations. From such customs, it is said to follow that beneficed clergymen, "shall not spend their "tithes and offerings after a good conscience,

CHAP. VI.

"and God's law, but must waste them on the rich "and the idle." It is observed, also, that "on each "holy day these small curates shall commonly "have letters from their ordinaries to summon "and to curse poor men, and for nought, except "the covetousness of the clerks of antichrist; "and if they refuse to summon and curse them, "though they know not why they should, they shall "be injured, and summoned from day to day, "from one far place to a farther, or be accursed, "or lose their benefice, or their profits." Refusing to become parties to such proceedings, they are instantly reproached as the enemies of all episcopal jurisdiction; and to avoid that expenditure, which the ostentatious and the luxurious manners of the clergy in that age required, was to become the object of almost every species of malevolence. "So many cursed deceits," observes the reformer, "hath antichrist brought up by his "worldly clerks to make curates mispend poor "men's goods, and not truly to do their office; or "else to forsake all, and to leave the clerks of "antichrist as lords of this world, to rob the "people by feigned censures, and to teach the "lore of the fiend, both by open preaching and "the example of an accursed life." Hence it appears, that if to become conformists in the particulars stated, was to misapply the patrimony of the poor, and to convert a spiritual office into the instrument of secular oppression and aggrandizement,—to be silent amid the prevalence of such evils, was regarded as no less opposed to fidelity. To be without a benefice, was not to be released from the obligation of preaching; and where the

doors of the church were closed, the voice of these conscientious men, might often be heard in its precincts, or in the high way to the towns and villages of the land. So many, indeed, and so serious were the corruptions in which the beneficed clergyman was expected to participate, that the root which they had acquired in the ecclesiastical system, is viewed as a phenomenon admitting of no explanation, except as constituting the signal chastisement of Heaven, incurred by the reckless depravity which had marked the later ages of the world.

The last reason, why some poor priests have no benefices, and that to which the greatest importance is attached, is, that by such a restriction, they should probably "be hindered from better "occupation, and from more profiting of holy "church." The charge which they had received from above, is declared to have respect to men in general, and to be binding, "wherever they "may help their brethren to heavenward, whether "by teaching, praying, or example giving." This general mission is conceived to require "a "general cure of charity, as had Christ, and his "apostles." It is observed, also, "that by this, "they most surely save themselves, and help "their brethren; and they are free to fly from "one city to another, when they are persecuted "by the clerks of antichrist, as Christ biddeth, "and the gospel. And thus they may best, "without any challenging of men, go and dwell "among the people where they shall most profit, "and for the time convenient, coming and going "after the moving of the Holy Ghost, and not

CHAP. VI.

"being hindered from doing what is best by the "jurisdiction of sinful men. Also they follow "Christ and his apostles, more in taking volun- "tary alms of the people whom they teach, than "in taking dymes and offerings, by customs "which sinful men have ordained in the time of "grace." Were these primitive manners to return to the church, the effect it is contended would be, that "those alms which the people "might and should give to true priests who truly "keep their order, would be freely rendered"; and all pomp and luxury being excluded from the hierarchy, the principal motives to that covetousness which had so pervaded the clergy, and proved so afflictive to the laity, would be destroyed. To expect a contempt of any perilous idulgence in the people, while their guides are visibly enslaved by it, is treated as folly. "For "these dreads," it is remarked, "and for many "thousand more; and for to be more like to the "life of Christ and his apostles; and for to profit "more their own souls, and to other men's, "some poor priests think with God to travel "about where they shall most profit, and by the "evidence that God giveth them, while they "have time, and a little bodily strehgth and "youth. Nevertheless, they condemn not curates, "who do well their office, and dwell where they "shall most profit, and teach truly and stably "the law of God against false prophets and the "accursed deceptions of the fiend. Christ, "for his endless mercy, help his priests, and "common people to beware of antichrist's deceits, "and to go even the right way to Heaven.

"Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity." The concession made in this extract should be remembered. It was not presumed by these itinerant instructors, that every beneficed man was necessarily a partisan of the practices which were the object of their censure. Leaving every such priest, if devoutly performing the duties, whether of prelacy, or of the village pastor, to the guidance of his own conscience; they simply claimed for themselves the right of emulating the zeal of evangelists, the office of such, being in their view less connected with temptation, and more adapted to the necessities of the times. CHAP. VI.

Among the persons who carried these devout sentiments into action, an important place is very properly assigned to William Thorp. Within the parish of Wycliffe was a hamlet bearing the name of Thorp. In the fourteenth century it was the residence of a family, known by the same designation;[7] and there are circumstances which render it probable that the confessor referred to, was a native of that spot, and a member of its principal household. It is from himself, we learn, that his parents were in circumstances which enabled them to expend considerable sums upon his education, with a view to his becoming a priest. But on reaching the years of manhood, he felt some grave scruples as to the propriety of assuming that office. His hesitation disappointed his friends, and so far excited their displeasure, that he had nearly resolved on quitting the home, which his conscientious feeling Notice of William Thorp.

[7] This appears from the inscriptions in the parish church, and from other local records.

CHAP. IVI.

had rendered a place of the greatest discomfort. Apprized of his half-formed purpose, his relatives were induced for a while to soften the severity of their manners toward him. The alternative, however, ere long, before him, was either to enter the church, or to wander a fugitive under the parental anathema. If a native of the parish of Wycliffe, the name and the doctrines of our reformer could hardly have been unknown to him; and it was submitted to his parents, that previous to forming his decision, he should be allowed to ascertain from certain who were considered wise priests, and of virtuous conversation, what the office of priesthood really imported. It is evident that the men intended were the rector of Lutterworth and his poor priests, though we know not that this was understood by the kindred of this young enquirer after truth. They consented, however, to his proposal, gave him their blessing, and supplied him with money for his journey. "And so," he observes, "I went to those "priests, whom I heard to be of best name and "of most holy living, and best learned, and most "wise of heavenly wisdom; and so I communed "with them unto the time that I perceived by their "virtuous and continual occupations, that their "honest and charitable works passed their fame "which I had heard before of them." After a considerable intercourse with these good men, among whom Hereford and Reppington were then numbered, and particularly with Wycliffe himself, Thorp resolved on joining them in their labours. Through more than thirty winters, he continued to advocate their doctrines in the different parts

of England, especially in the northern counties. CHAP. LVI.
At the close of that period, terror and persuasion were employed, with a view to induce a renunciation of the tenets which he had learned from the lips and from the writings of our reformer, but they were employed in vain. His examination before archbishop Arundel, will be noticed in a subsequent chapter; but his sentiments with respect to preaching, and the general obligations of the priestly office, were doubtless common to the class of men with whom he considered it a peculiar honor to be associated. These may accordingly be inserted with propriety in this place.

Accused by the primate of preaching without a license, and of laying claim to a peculiar wisdom and sanctity, the prisoner replies. "By the authority of God's law, and also of saints and "doctors, I am taught to believe that it is every "priest's office and duty to preach busily, freely, "and truly the word of God. For no doubt, "every priest should propose first in his soul, to "make known to the people the word of God, "according to his knowledge and power, ever "proving his words to be true by his virtuous "works. For this intent, also, we suppose that "bishops and other prelates of holy church "should chiefly take and use their prelacy, and "for the same cause bishops should give to priests "their orders. For bishops should admit no "man to the priesthood, except that he hath "good will, and full purpose, and were well "disposed, and well learned to preach. Where-"fore, Sir, by the bidding of Christ, and by the "example of his most holy living, and also by

CHAP. VI.

"the living of his holy apostles and prophets, we "are bound under full great pain, to exercise our- "selves after our knowledge and power (as every "priest is likewise charged of God) that we may "fulfil duly the office of priesthood. We, presume, "not here of ourselves, for to be esteemed faithful "disciples and special followers of Christ, neither "in our own reputation, nor in any other man's. "But, Sir, as I said to you before, we judge thus "from the authority chiefly of God's word, where "it is the chief duty of every priest to employ "himself faithfully in making known the law "of God unto the people, and so to communicate "the commandments of God in charity, when, "and to whom, that ever we may." Such are the obligations which are said to devolve imperiously on every priest, and desiring to be faithful disciples of Christ, he writes, "we pray "this gracious Lord, for his holy name, that he "would make us able to please him with devout "prayers, and charitable priestly works, that we "may obtain of him to follow him thankfully."[a]

[a] Fox. i. 687—708. Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, i.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S WRITINGS SUBSEQUENT TO HIS EXCLUSION FROM OXFORD — HIS TRIALOGUS — ON OBEDIENCE TO PRELATES — ON THE DECEITS OF SATAN AND OF HIS PRIESTS — ON THE DUTY OF LORDS — OF SERVANTS AND LORDS — OF GOOD PREACHING PRIESTS — ON THE FOUR DEGREES OF ANTICHRIST — ON THE PRAYERS OF GOOD MEN — OF CLERKS POSSESSIONERS — RISE OF THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE AVIGNON POPE, AND ITS FAILURE — WYCLIFFE RENEWS HIS CONTEST WITH THE MENDICANTS — HIS TREATISE ON THE SENTENCE OF THE CURSE EXPOUNDED — ON PRELATES AND OTHER SUBJECTS — HIS SENTIMENTS ON WAR — EXTRACTS FROM HIS SERMONS — HIS SICKNESS AND DEATH.

THE reader must be left to judge of the sorrow and foreboding which arose in the mind of Thorp and his brethren, as the arm of intolerance was raised to reduce them to silence or consign them to a prison. They would regard their own fate, as involved in the case of Hereford, and his associates; and as determined, by the result of the prosecution instituted against Wycliffe. That result we have witnessed, and our attention is now called to the conduct of the reformer during the years of his life, which appear to have been wholly passed upon his rectory. But while evidently sedulous in the performance of his duties with respect to the parish of Lutterworth, his discourses, and his numerous compositions produced at this period, demonstrate, that his zeal as a reformer of the english hierarcy, and as an adversary of the papal power, had gathered intensity from the means which had been employed to extinguish it.

During the interval between his appearance

CHAP. VII.

before the papal delegates at Lambeth in 1378, and before the Oxford convocation in 1382, his industry appears to have been almost exclusively directed to effect his translation of the scriptures. That great work achieved, he commenced his attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation; and expelled for this cause from the university, he addressed himself to the composition of a series of books, all intended to demonstrate the necessity of reform, both in the faith, and in the manners of the church.

Notice of Wycliffe's writings subsequent to his exclusion from Oxford. His Trialogus.

Among his works completed subsequent to his exclusion from Oxford, the first place must be allotted to his Trialogus. A modern historian, whose patient research has merited the confidence of the public, describes this treatise as a production of the period between 1372 and 1377. This is presumed to follow from the circumstance, that the writer refers to the first of those years as recent. The work, however, is replete with the author's objections to the received doctrine on the eucharist, embracing all the points of the controversy which arose with respect to that sacrament. Whatever the reformer's opinions were on that subject in 1377, it is evident from the events of that year, and of the following, that they had not then attracted the notice of the clergy. That no novelty of sentiment had then been avowed with respect to that rite, must be inferred from the fact, that the articles of complaint supplied by the pontiff, contain not the remotest hint of error in relation to it; and also from the circumstance, that when the views of transubstantiation expressed in the Trialogus,

were publicly announced in 1382, the sensation created by them was so powerful, as to render them almost the exclusive object of attention with the orthodox. But apart from these particulars, the date of this work is placed beyond doubt by the fact, that the very passage in which the year 1378 is adverted to as recent, contains an allusion to the council and the earthquake which took place just ten years later. It may, however, be concluded, that the reformer had delivered the larger portion of the Trialogus from his divinity chair at different periods previous to 1382; but when those parts were arranged for publication in the form of a treatise, various additions appear to have been made to them; and such as render the entire work, a more complete exhibition of the mind of the author, than any other separate production. It is the same composition which is frequently referred to, under the name of dialogues; and toward the close of the work, it is remarked, that the form of a dialogue had been adopted, because usually more spirited, and more interesting to the general reader, than that of dissertations. Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom, are accordingly personified; and in discussing almost every point of controversy connected with religion in that age, the first proposes the question; the second, urges objections; and the last, performs the office of umpire. Through the whole, the attention is frequently called from the simpler views of morality and religion, to con-

CHAP. VII.

It is surprising that this should have escaped Mr. Turner's notice. See Hist. v. 177. Trialogus. Lib. iv. c. 36. The printed copies of this work which I have chiefly consulted, are that in the British Museum, and one equally beautiful in the possession of the Rev. Thomas Russell, of Walworth. See chapter on the reformer's writings. Art. Trial.

CHAP. VII.

template them through the medium of scholastic abstractions; a circumstance which may be regretted, but which at the same time serves to render the work, a more faithful disclosure of the modes of thinking, familiar to the devout and the educated among our ancestors, in the fourteenth century. It should be stated, also, that the native obscurity of many things contained in this book, is rendered still more perplexing by a style which partakes considerably of the barbarism of the age, and by numerous errors which appear to have been those of transcribers or of the press. Still, passing over these defects, and the obsolete character of the learning which it frequently displays; the lucid statements of the most important doctrines, which are constantly occurring in the Trialogus, confer upon it a value to which no second production of the same period is entitled.[2]

The work consists of four books, and these are subdivided into numerous chapters. Nearly the whole of the first book is occupied, in discussing a series of questions, relating to the existence and perfections of the Deity. All excellencies that may possibly exist, are considered as having their place in the divine nature; and while those diffused over creation proceed alone from him, every thing in man opposed to the nature of God, considered in his spiritual attributes, is affirmed to be depravity, founded in weakness and error.

[2] Mr. Turner observes, "Its attractive merit was, that it combined the "new opinions with the scholastic style of thinking and deductions. It "was not the mere illiterate reformer, teaching novelties, whom the man "of education disdained and derided; it was the respected academician "reasoning with the ideas of the reformer." Hist. v. 177. Lenfant discovered a copy of this work, in the library of the university of Frankfort on the Oder. Council of Constance I. 532.

The doctrine of the Trinity, is of course discussed, and some attention is bestowed on certain natural appearances which was supposed to illustrate that mysterious truth. After some remarks on the theories of Plato and Aristotle, respecting ideas, the writer concludes with a censure on the papal authority; as by sanctioning the doctrine which declared the sacred host to be an accident without a subject, it had affirmed that to be true, which no mind may possibly comprehend. In a previous conversation relating to the mystery of the Trinity, the reformer had observed; "Some men "are so strangely mistaken in judging on this "subject, as to suppose that the light of faith is "contrary to that of nature; and accordingly, "that what may seem impossible to the latter, "should be implicitly received upon the testimony "of the former. But the truth is, men call their "own darkness the light of nature, and hence "weakly suppose, that the light of reason and "of scripture are at variance with each other." Thus also, in concluding the above observation on the eucharist, it is remarked, that "God teaches us the "truth, and nothing but the truth, and what may be "known by us to be such." This doctrine is inculcated, for the immediate purpose of exposing the necessary falsehood of transubstantiation; but it is also urged in this, and in other instances, to secure to the reason of man its due influence with respect to religious faith in general; and the ingenuity of the writer is successfully employed, to vindicate his assent to the doctrine of the Trinity, while rejecting the dogmas which had corrupted the eucharist.

CHAP. VII.

CHAP. VII.

A large portion of the second book is devoted, to the speculations of the day on the elements and revolutions of the visible universe; and as a whole, it is chiefly remarkable as opposing the materialism of Avenoes respecting the human soul: as stating the old series of philosophical arguments in proof of the soul's immortality: as containing the doctrine of the reformer on predestination and grace: and as treating the pretensions of the astrologer with contempt, and every thing in natural philosophy as yet in its infancy. The two last conclusions are truths of which men are now fully aware, but which some of the most enlightened in the fourteenth century would have been slow to acknowledge.

The third book relates more immediately to moral and theological opinions. The power to act virtuously and devoutly wherever possessed, is said to be derived from the grace of God; and hence, it is inferred, that no excellence of mind or conduct can be justly regarded as meriting eternal life. Faith is defined as an assent of the reason, referring exclusively to the truth, and to things unseen; as forming the basis of all christian enjoyment; and as that principle, the declension of which must necessarily precede each gradation in apostacy. The love of God, is beautifully inculcated as the only secure foundation of morals, and of social happiness. He is described as in all things worthy of supreme affection; and the love of his nature is declared to be inseparable from that of his laws, which are truly the expression of his character, the revelation of himself. Hence, philanthropy, and whatever is included in faith,

hope, or charity, is viewed as comprehended in what the laws of the Creator require. The portions of this book which relate to the evil of sin; to the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice, as necessary to procure its remission; to the excellencies of the Redeemer's character, and to the doctrines of grace; are distinguished from passages referring to the same matters, and inserted in some other pages of this work, but as being more strongly marked by the scholastic method of treating them; a peculiarity which would not add to their attraction with a modern reader. In the seventh and eighth chapters the disciples of Pelagius, and those who but partially adopt his system, are assailed as "weak simonists," who conceive that grace is to be bought or sold as an article of merchandise; and the writer states his own doctrine, respecting the necessity of future events in strong and somewhat perplexing language. But the thirtieth and the thirty-first chapters are the most important in the series. In these, the authority of the church, the invocation of saints, and many other errors are exposed; and the sufficiency of the scriptures, and of the aids of the One Mediator, together with some other articles of protestant doctrine, are boldly taught.

It is, however, in the last book of the Trialogus, that the peculiar doctrines of its author become most conspicuous; and to this, his opponents directed their chief attention. While considering what are called the seven sacraments, as possessing different measures of importance, and all as more or less disfigured by human inventions, the validity of each is still left unquestioned. The doctrine of the eucharist is treated pre-

CHAP. VII.

cisely as in his Wicket, and his Confessions. In its nature, it is verily bread, sacramentally, it is the body of Christ; and much powerful reasoning is employed, to expose the gross impossibilities, inseparable from the tenet of transubstantiation. In the sanction conferred on this dogma by the pontiffs, the writer perceives the fulfilment of the prophet Daniel's prediction, concerning the desolation which should profane the holy place. "For what," it is enquired, "can "form a more odious desolation, than to see upon "the christian altar, by the appointment of anti-"christ, a number of consecrated hosts, all ex-"posed to the adoration of the people, though "naturally, they are merely bread, and the "body of Christ, but in figure? Nor is it at "all to the purpose to say, that they do not "worship the host, but that they reverence it for "the sake of the body of Christ which is in it; "for the uncreated Trinity is a nobler object "than the mere body and blood of Christ, and "as there is no creature wherein the Trinity is "not, all creatures should for the same reason be "adored." Baptism, he describes as removing the stain of original sin; and it is even asserted, that no man may be saved, while refusing to submit to it. Confirmation, is also viewed, as placing the soul under the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit; and ordination, as far as it was connected with the appointment of priests and deacons, is viewed as of divine origin; but the application of that rite to men, distinguished by other names, or sustaining other offices, is described as an innovation, and as of very doubtful propriety. His subsequent remarks on the sacramental services,

have nothing peculiar in them. They are connected, however, as usual, with complaints respecting the vices of the mendicants, and the worldliness of the secular clergy; and it is repeatedly affirmed to be an act of weakness to concede any portion of that supremacy which the pontiffs had so long claimed. In the concluding chapters, the writer anticipates the event of death, the resurrection, the judgment, and the character of the opposite allotments awaiting the human race, after the dissolution of all things. In this part of the work, amid much that is speculative, there is much that is distinguished by its seriousness and devotion.[3]

CHAP. VII.

Among the reformer's manuscripts still extant, are many pieces which were evidently produced

His treatise on obedience to prelates.

[3] The following passage has been adduced, to show the consciousness of danger with which the writer pursued his plans as a reformer. We shall meet with many such in his other works relating to the same period. "As all ought to be the soldiers of Christ, it is evident how many "are condemned by their sloth, who allow the fear of losing temporal "benefits, or of worldly friendships, or of the welfare of the body, to "make them unfaithful to God's cause, or averse to stand manfully for "it, even to death if necessary. Modern hypocrites say, through the "device of Satan, that it is not necessary now to suffer martyrdom, as it "was in the primitive church, because now all, or the greater part of "living men are believers, and that there are now no tyrants to put "christians to death. This excuse comes of satan; for if the faithful now "would stand firm for the law of Christ, and as his soldiers endure "bravely any sufferings, they might tell the pope, the cardinals, the "bishops, and other prelates how departing from the faith of the gos-"pel, they minister improperly to God, and commit perilous injury "against his people." Trial. The conduct thus adverted to, as leading to martyrdom, will be remembered as that which the reformer was steadily pursuing. Again, he powerfully adds, "visit not pagans to "convert them by martyrdom, but rather preach constantly the law of "Christ, even to the princely prelates, and if we persevere in faith and "patience, martyrdom will come with sufficient speed." Ibid. Turner. Hist. v. 181, 182. For some further notices of this work, see the chapter on the opinions of Wycliffe, and that on his writings.

CHAP. VII.

about the same period with the work now described. His treatise intitled "On Obedience to "Prelates,"[1] was written subsequent to the spring of 1382. It commences with stating that "prelates "slander poor priests, and other christian men, "saying that they will not obey their sovereign, nor "fear the curse, nor dread, nor keep the law, but "despise all things which are against their liking; "and that they ought in consequence to be de-"stroyed, lest they prove the destruction of holy "church, and of Christendom." In his attempt to refute this calumny, and to counteract the malignant purposes to which it was applied, he avows his readiness, and that of his followers, to honor the prelates in all particulars, where their doctrine and their life, shall be found conformable to the lessons of scripture. To demand more than this, it is argued, must be to require a degree of submission, which neither apostles nor the Lord himself exacted, though evidently possessing the gifts of inspiration and miracles, and exhibiting a life of unsullied devotion. If the injunctions of the word of God, and the laws of the jurisdiction exercised by the prelates, be found opposed to each other, reason and piety are said to suggest, that the authority of the greater should be preferred to that of the less. Let bishops emulate the zeal of apostles, and the homage of the priesthood and of the people will not be wanting. And let the same regard for the will of the supreme Lord, as it is contained in the scriptures, regulate their application of spiritual

[1] MS. C. C. Cambridge, Trinity College, Dublin, class c. tab. 3. No. 12.

censures; or be observable in the laws of any christian community; and true men will be the last to despise the one or the other. But modern prelates, it is asserted, are too frequently the enemies of all piety; and their ceaseless efforts to assimilate the maxims of the gospel to their character, is the source to which every religious and moral disorder must be traced. The vigour with which these topics are discussed, will appear from extracts to be inserted in the next chapter. It is thus the writer concludes the defence of himself and of his disciples: "Let worldly "prelates, then, cease to slander poor priests, "saying, that they will not obey their sovereigns, "nor dread the curse, but despise the law; for "in all these three, they are clear before God and "man, if right, and reason, and charity be well "sought." CHAP. VII.

His tract on the deceits of satan and of his priests.

Another composition, bearing upon the same evils, is described by its author as shewing "how "Satan, and his priests, and his feigned religions, "study by their cursed heresies to destroy all "good living, and to maintain all manner of "sin."[5] The allusions in this tract to the controversy respecting the vernacular scriptures, and to the existing persecutions, determine its date. The writer complains indignantly, of the efforts which were made to diminish the authority of holy writ; and to raise man's interpretation of its meaning, into the place that should be peculiar to the volume itself. This policy he defines as "a feign-"ing to be wiser than God." He also censures

[5] MS. C. C. Cambridge.

CHAP. VII.

the artifices, by which the religious were frequently known, to induce the young to adopt the vows of their fraternities; and to the charge of malevolence as preferred by the clergy, while suffering under his rebuke, it is replied that, if such reproofs are inconsistent with charity, the life of Christ, of his apostles, and of the prophets who preceded them, must form a dangerous example to the church. "Almighty God," he observes, "who is full of charity, commandeth the prophet "Isaiah, to cry, and cease not; and to shew to the "people their great sins. The sin of the com-"mons is great, the sin of lords, of mighty men, "and of wise men is more; but the sin of prelates "is most of all, and most blindeth the people. "True men are bound therefore, by God's com-"mand, to cry most against the sins of prelates, "since it is in itself the most, and harmeth most "the people." It was particularly objected, that the censures adverted to, were generally uttered in the absence of the parties concerned. But it is remarked of these same parties, that "antichrist maketh them so mighty, that in their "presence no man dare speak against their open "sins, unless he would be dead anon." To limit freedom of speech, therefore, to such occasions, it was well known, was to proscribe it entirely. The writer concludes, by devoutly praying that God, himself, would divest the clerks of antichrist of their power to impede the progress of his truth, and that "he would strengthen all manner of "men to maintain the truth of holy writ, and to "destroy all falsehood, and openly to oppose both "in word and deed all hypocrisy, and heresy,

"and covetousness in all prelates and priests: CHAP. VII.
"for thus shall good life and truth, and peace
"and charity reign among christian men! Jesus
"Christ! for thine endless mercy, grant us this!
"Amen!"

Connected with this reproof of the temper and maxims of the clergy, was a renewed appeal to the secular authorities, stating three "skills" or reasons which would induce lords "to con- "strain clerks to live in meekness, wilful poverty, "and discreet penance, and ghostly travail."[6] The first argument employed is deduced from the penalties of scripture, as certainly awaiting the persons addressed, should they continue to neglect this momentous duty. The second is deduced, from the happiness which must be diffused, by extending the influence of an enlightened piety; and the last is founded on the political benefits, which must result from a correction of religious abuses. From this spirited production, some extracts will also be given in the chapter devoted to the fuller statement of the reformer's opinions. On the duty of lords.

In aid of these appeals to the magistrate, Wycliffe, also published his treatise intitled, "Of Servants and Lords, how each should keep "his degree."[7] In this work, the author asserts the legitimate authority of the civil power; and largely quotes from the New Testament scriptures, to demonstrate that the principles which induce some devout men to discard the guidance of a vicious clergy in religion, are not such as to Of servants and lords.

[6] Ibid. [7] Ibid.

CHAP. VII.

interfere with any branch of their duty as subjects of the sovereign. To the evils of bad government, the writer shews himself to be by no means insensible; but while reproving vice with the same freedom, whether found in lords or churchmen, his protest is entered against the artifice of applying to the magistrate, the reasonings which he had employed but to invalidate the false pretensions of the priesthood. The manner in which the reformer distinguished between the claims of the two authorities, will presently invite our attention. It will be sufficient here, to remark of this production, that there is no seed of anarchy to be extracted from it, but that it is rather fraught with every scriptural element of social, and of religious obligation.

Of good preaching priests.

Unwearied in his efforts to vindicate the character, and the general conduct of his followers, it was at this period that Wycliffe finished a work on the subject "Of Good Preaching "Priests."[8] Its design, was to afford a farther developement of the principles embraced by the reformer's poor priests. Their first object is said to be, "that the law of God, may be steadily "known, taught, maintained, and magnified; "secondly, that great and open sin which reigneth "in divers states, be destroyed, and also the "heresy and hypocrisy of antichrist and of his fol-"lowers; thirdly, that very peace and prosperity, "and burning charity be increased in Christen-"dom, and particularly in the realm of England, "for to bring men readily to the bliss of Heaven."

[8] Ibid.

In a series of articles, the writer then proceeds to demonstrate the necessity of the effort made by these reformers; censures loudly the imprisonment of men before openly convicted of offence; and condemning every species of secret process against an accused party, he demands for each person, as an unalienable right, the substance of that freedom from the controul of the magistrate, and of the prelates, which has since become the privilege of englishmen. CHAP. VII.

The opponents of Wycliffe were fully aware, that the proficiency of his disciples as preachers, was a circumstance from which they derived the principal share of their influence; and it would be deemed important that the authority employed to silence them, should be accompanied by some shew of reasoning. It is accordingly the object of one of the reformer's pieces, completed about this time, to expose, "four deceits by which antichrist, and his clerks would prevent true priests from preaching Christ's gospel."[9] The first objection to this favorite occupation of the poor priests, is, that "it maketh dissension and enmity." But to this it is replied, that there is a kind of peace which the Author of the gospel came not to establish; that the only repose which may be innocently left unbroken, is that which is founded on just principles, and heavenly affections; and that whatever hostility may be excited, by the effort to bring the minds of men to that state, should be encountered without fear. If the first objection to the zeal of the new preachers

On the four deceits of antichrist.

[9] Ibid.

CHAP. VII.

be deemed weak, the second must be considered as much more so. Many, it is affirmed, will perish, though they hear the gospel; and perish the more unhappily, "because they hear God's "word, and do not thereafter." But in reply, it is proved to be a doctrine of scripture, that the more the gospel is preached, the fewer men will be lost; and that where men really fail to embrace the faith of Christ, many a partial renunciation of sin, and many a real, though imperfect virtue, may be the result of listening to its ministry; and such results are viewed, as serving to diminish the sufferings even of the finally impenitent. "But "wherever a gathering of people is," it is remarked, "there is commonly some good men, "and for them principally men preach God's "word." Nor was this antinomian tenet as opposed to preaching, considered merely with respect to the impenitent, but also as it referred to the elect. "Good men," it was asserted, "shall be "saved, though there be no preaching; for as "God saith it, they may not perish." It is thus that this objection is refuted. "Here true men "say, that as God hath ordained good men to "bliss, so he hath ordained them to come to bliss "by the preaching, and by the keeping of his word. "So that even as they must need come to bliss; "they must needs hear and keep God's com- "mandments. And herein to them serveth "preaching." Whatever of necessity there may be in the end, was thus extended to the means. The fourth deceit employed to degrade the office of preaching, is said to be "that men should "cease from preaching, and give themselves to

" holy prayers and contemplation, for that helpeth CHAP. VII.
" christian men more and is better." But it is immediately added, " true men say boldly, that " true preaching is better than praying by mouth, " even though it come from the heart, and with " pure devotion. The people too, it edifieth " more. And therefore Christ especially com- " mandeth his apostles and disciples to preach the " gospel, and not to close themselves in cloisters " nor churches, nor in caves to pray thus. There- " fore, Paul saith, Woe is me, if I preach not the " gospel. Devout prayer of men of good life, is " good in certain times; but it is against charity " for priests to pray evermore, and at no time to " preach; since Christ chargeth priests more to " preach the gospel, than to say mass and " matins."

It was thus, that the reformer continued to defend the peculiarities of his clerical disciples. About the same period, the reasoning with which the above treatise concludes, was much extended in a work which proposed to shew, " how the " prayer of good men helpeth much, and prayer " of sinful men displeaseth God, and harmeth " themselves, and other men."[10] In this piece, which breathes a spirit of the purest devotion, the promises and the examples of scripture are largely cited, to demonstrate the excellence and the efficacy of prayer; and the same book is appealed to as teaching no less decisively, the vanity of the most costly offerings that may be presented by the hypocrite, the vicious, or the formalist. It

On the prayers of good men.

[10] Ibid.

CHAP. VII.

is deplored, as among the most foreboding circumstances of the times, that men are so far disposed to confide in the prayer of such intercessors; and thus to yield to a delusion, which not only tended to impoverish them in this world, but to involve them in the ruin of the next.

Indeed there is scarcely a class of men, or a species of religious error of which the writings of Wycliffe at this period, may not be found to treat, and in a manner which anticipates almost every fact in our subsequent improvement as a nation. Thus in one of his productions, the manner in which he had refuted the errors opposed to the office of preaching, is extended to a series of similar misconceptions with respect to religion in general. It is remarked, for instance, that by the phrase "holy church," men commonly understand its accredited ministers only; by the term "religious"—hordes of vagrant friars, or the useless inmates of a cloister; by the expression, "the law of the church," the decrees of popes and of councils, and not the decisions of holy writ; to yield "obedience," was not to submit to what the conscience had recognised as the will of God, but to bow to what presumption had imposed upon the credulous; and by sin, was generally meant, some venial offence, the guilt of which, "may be washed away with a paternoster, with "holy water, a pardon, a bishop's blessing, and "in many other light ways." Another treatise commences with the assertion, that nearly all the evils of the land arose from the delinquencies "of "false confessors, false merchants, and false men "of law," and this assertion, it is employed in

proving. The confessors intended, are chiefly the mendicants, for they had nearly engrossed that function to themselves; the merchants, are the conductors of our infant commerce, but who, it would seem had already begun to diffuse the evils of their traffic along with his benefits; and the lawyers adverted to, are principally those entrusted with the power of the spiritual courts. CHAP. VII.

But at this period, it was in a treatise called, "Of Clerks Possessioners,"[11] that the reformer mainly attempted his exposure of the irreligion, which in his view, had resulted to so great a degree, from the opulence, and the secular jurisdiction of the clergy. This work consists of forty chapters, and from its notices of the wrongs inflicted on certain preachers of the gospel, "because they live poorly and justly, and go "about teaching God's word," and also of some other topics of controversy, its date must be subsequent to 1382. From its contents, we may farther conclude, that it had appeared before the close of the year following. Each chapter, is devoted to an investigation of some feature, in the general corruption of the church. But the leading subjects of complaint are, that the ample revenues which are known to be "poor men's goods," rather than the property of the clergy, should be so commonly spent by that order in luxurious living, and in carelessness of the wants which often oppressed the members of their flock; and that while the wealth of ecclesiastics served thus to ensnare them to modes of life which were forbidden, the nature

Of clerks possessioners.

[11] Ibid.

CHAP. VII.

of their jurisdiction, and of the offices to which they were frequently raised, should be such as of necessity to divert their attention from spiritual things. It is stated also, that the affluence, and the secular power of the clergy, had every where become the most potent engines of oppression; crushing every man who should dare to attempt a separation between the doctrines of christianity, and the dreams of superstition. If the christian priesthood be ever again employed "in studying and teaching of holy writ, "in devotion, and prayer, in thinking, and heavenly sweetness," the preliminary steps, it is contended, must be to diminish the force of temptation, by a reduction of their revenue, and by releasing them from the bonds of all secular employment. Neither Christ, nor his apostles, could be induced to unite the office of the secular and of the spiritual steward; and hence, it is contended, that unless the churchmen of the age can prove themselves to be superior in capacity to the Head of the church, and the witnesses of his resurrection, the effect of the existing order of things must be pernicious. His prayer in conclusion is, that "Almighty God would stir up his priests, "lords, and commons, to detect the hypocrisy, "heresy, and treason of antichrist's worldly "clerks; and to know, and maintain the rightful "ordinance of God, and the profit and freedom "of the gospel."

But while these, and similar compositions,—all produced about this period,—bespoke the growing zeal with which the rector of Lutterworth continued to prosecute his plans of reform, a test was

CHAP. VII.

applied to the popular feeling in England, which discovers, that his principles, though widely disseminated, had hitherto acquired but a limited ascendancy over the mind of his countrymen. The reader will remember the schism, which at this moment divided the papacy. France acknowledged the authority of Clement, who had fixed his residence at Avignon: and England was at the head of that portion of Christendom, which recognised the claims of Urban.[12] These pontiffs had employed their spiritual weapons against each other, and against their respective partisans, with the most boisterous freedom: but the last arrow, on either side, had been spent in vain. It was now resolved, to ascertain the effect of an alliance, between the elements of this world and the terrors of the next; and to produce a military crusade against the Avignon pontiff and his adherents, every species of indulgence, which had been granted for the purpose of propelling the western nations toward the holy sepulchre was resorted to. As the hostilities thus devised, were to be considered as the effort of the church, it was the determination of the pope to reserve the principal command to an ecclesiastic; and this doubtful honor was conferred on Spencer, the bishop of Norwich, a prelate who had already given decisive evidence of his passion for military adventure. In 1377,[13] an incident occurred, which betrayed his contempt of the civil power, as compared with that

Rise of the crusade against the Avignon pope

[12] See chap. i. The story of this enterprize is minutely and amusingly told by Froissart. Vol. vi. c. 51—65.

[13] Fox. Acts, &c.

CHAP. VII.

of his own order; but his vanity proved so offensive to the populace of the town in which it was displayed, as to have endangered his life. His rough treatment in that instance, was probably the means of encreasing his christian abhorrence of that class of society, which he had scornfully described as the ribald multitude; for during the insurrection of the commons in 1382, while the government was strangely inactive, Spencer was at the head of his vassals, and the tranquillity of his diocese is attributed to his vigilance. His name, also, occurs in the list of the prelates who sat in judgment on Wycliffe at Oxford; and his memorable controversy with Epringham, a disciple of our reformer, and a magistrate of Norwich, has placed his hatred of the lollards beyond dispute.[14] The bull with which he was entrusted, vested him with extraordinary powers. The laity adhering to the antipope, and all who should in any manner favor them, were not only sentenced to lose every worldly office and possession, but to be slain with the sword. With respect to the clergy who had become parties to the schism, he was instructed to exert his whole power with a view to deprive them of every cure, honor, and emolument; and it was left to his discretion, to insist on the presence of the most privileged members of the hierarchy, in the camp of the crusaders. Against all who should presume to oppose the discharge of this commission, though possessing regal dignity, the prelate was to launch the anathemas of the church; while, to such as

[14] Wals. Hist. ubi supra.

should enlist themselves in aid of this sacred purpose, though dying before the struggle should commence; and to such as should contribute in the smallest degree of their property with the same view; the remission of all trespasses was certainly secured, together with every immunity conceded to such "as go to fight for the "holy land."[15]

To render this measure, as little objectionable as possible to the english court and parliament; it was suggested by the pontiff, that to meet its expenses, a tenth should be raised from the revenues of the clergy; and that every thing obtained from the laity should be strictly voluntary, and bear the name of alms. Such, however, was the zeal of Urban, that more than thirty bulls were despatched to England on this subject; and the conduct of the the english prelates in rendering these documents the ground of inflammatory appeals from the pulpit, supplied an example which the inferior clergy would not be slow to imitate.[16] "All who should "die at this time," observes Froissart, "and who "had given their money, were absolved from "every fault, and by the tenure of the bull, "happy were they who could now die, in order to "obtain so noble an absolution." It was the arrangement of the pope, that France and Spain should be invaded at the same moment; the expedition against the latter kingdom being entrusted to the duke of Lancaster, in virtue of his claim as king of Castile, and perhaps, with the hope of detaching him more completely from the rank of the

[15] Fox. i. 582, 583. [16] Froissart.

CHAP. VII.

reformers. Froissart assures us, that the sums raised by these expedients, were considered sufficient for both enterprizes; but while smiling at the easy faith of the good people of England, he states it as well known, that the nobles of this land held the absolutions of the church in so little esteem, that with them, unless offers of money were made, all other inducements would be useless. "Men at arms," he adds, "cannot live on "pardons, nor do they pay much attention to "them, except at the point of death." If Lancaster, was ever really interested in the part allotted to him, he soon found himself obliged to abandon it. France was the nearer, and the rival kingdom; and if to invade it under the command of a churchman, could occur as a difficulty, that prelate was a man of family, and the representative of the head of Christendom. Before leaving England, Spencer and his followers were sworn to limit their hostilities to the adherents of the antipope, and thus pledged on the twenty-third of April 1383, they disembarked at Calais. Some weeks were there passed, in waiting the arrival of Sir William Beauchamp, whose presence, with some reinforcements, had been promised by the english monarch; but that knight failed to make his appearance; the bishop became impatient; and it was resolved to make an excursion into Flanders, a country then subject to the power of France. Sir Hugh Calverly, who appears to be the only man engaged in this undertaking, without relinquishing the guidance of common sense, objected seriously to the proposed movement; insisting that the instructions of their sovereign respecting

Sir William Beauchamp, ought not to be violated; and, moreover, that the earl of Flanders, and his subjects, were believed to be good Urbanists. To these obstacles, the bishop opposed a torrent of angry and contemptuous declamation. The experienced soldier was provoked, and avowed himself prepared to execute the instructions of his superior, however perilous, or however much he might question their wisdom or their equity. The town of Gravellines, was first assailed. It was principally inhabited by fishermen; possessed but the feeblest means of defence; and was farther exposed to all the disadvantages of a surprise. The followers of the bishop must be regarded as fulfilling his commands, and whether exasperated by the resistance which he had encountered, or wishing to operate by the agency of terror, the innocent inhabitants were put to the sword, and with an atrocity so unsparing, that in the language of Walsingham, not one of them remained alive. The earl of Flanders sent his messengers to complain of this wanton aggression; but the devout priest, replied, with an oath, that the invaded territory had been conquered by the french; and that the effort of the english to wrest it from the grasp of a power with which they were at war, was an act which required no explanation. From Gravellines, the crusaders proceeded to Dunkirk, where a struggle ensued, in which several hundreds of the english, and nearly ten thousand of the Flemings are said to have perished. The capture of that town, was soon followed by the possession of others, where the inhabitants hoped to protect themselves from the ferocity of the

CHAP. VII.

victors by the show of submission. Spencer, it will be supposed, was elated beyond measure by these triumphs; so much was this the case, that he boasted of his readiness to measure his strength with that of the king of France, and of the duke of Burgundy, who had united their forces, and were proceeding by slow marches to strip him of his spoil. On their approach, his acquisitions fell from his grasp, with a rapidity equal to that with which they were secured. Any rash man, in the same circumstances, might have made them; and rash men only, could for a moment have regarded them as permanent. His escape to England, was among the fortunate incidents of his life: but the censure and contempt with which he was every where assailed on his return, must have been a severe species of trial to his vain, and irritable temper.[17]

Wycliffe renews his contest with the mendicants.

The reader will remember, that the proceedings against Wycliffe, before the Oxford convocation in 1382, derived much of their severity from the hatred of the mendicants. Stern as the discussions had often been betwixt the religious orders, and the secular clergy, their animosities were for a while concealed, that the parties regarding as hostile to both, might be at once overpowered. The ebullition of fanaticism described

[17] Ibid. Wals. The companions of Spencer shared in his disgrace. Robert de Foulmer, a clergyman, and treasurer to the bishop of Norwich, was imprisoned, and 5000 golden francs levied on his goods. A similar punishment was also awarded to Sir W. Elmham, Sir W. Farndon, Sir Thomas Trivet, and Robert Fitzrauf. But this sentence which was announced on the 6th of March was rescinded on the 14th of May. Rymer, ann. 1384.

above, took place in 1383, and in giving it existence, the officious zeal of the new orders was every where prominent. The reformer had no sooner returned to Lutterworth, than he published an extended commentary on the text, "Beware of "the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypo- "crisy."[18] The design of this address, was to identify the followers of St. Francis and of St. Dominic, in the existing system, with the pharisees of Judea at the period of the advent. Both parties are minutely described; and they are said to rival each other in the sanctity of their pretensions, and in the character and multitude of their offences; and as their known vices were rendered still more dark by the veil of their peculiar profession, their hypocrisy is declared to be "the most accursed and poisonous of all." It is affirmed also, that "if by subtlety, by hypocrisy, "and by help from the laws of antichrist they "hinder curates and poor priests from teaching "men the law of God, for fear lest their hypocrisy "be perceived, and their winning and worldly "fame be laid low,—they are accursed man-slayers, "and the cause of destruction to all the souls that "perish from default in knowing, and keeping, the "commandments of God. And if they preach "principally for worldly gain and vain glory, and "so preach themselves to be praised of men, and "not simply and plainly the gospel of Christ, for "his glory, and the gaining of men's souls; they "deal unfaithfully with the word of God, as Paul

CHAP. VII.

[18] MS. C. C. Cambridge.

CHAP. VII.

saith,"[19] He afterward adverts to the mendicants as sharing in the existing schism of the papacy, and to each party as declaring their opponents to be "heretics out of belief." His own assertion is, that "both are indeed out "of belief;" and that they "are bringing all "other men out of belief." Nor is the reformer less decisive, when referring to the duties of the men, who profess to deplore these and similar evils. He complains of "the cowardice of Christ's "disciples, if they spare from fear of bodily pain "or death, to tell openly the truth of God's law.

[19] The following portrait from the Sompnoure's Tale, in Chaucer, may be worthy of a place here, from its strict agreement with Wycliffe's notices of the same order:

Lordings! there is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,
A mersh contree ycalled Holdernesse,
In which ther went a limitour aboute,
To preche—and, eke, to beg, it is no doute.
And so befell, that on a day this frere,
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,
And specially, aboven every thing
Excited he the peple in his preching
To trentals, and to yeve, for Goddes sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
Ther as divine service is honoured,—
Not ther as it is wasted and devoured;
Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven
As to possessioners, that morven leven
(Thanked be God) in wel and abundance
'Trentrals,' said he, 'deliveren fro penance
'Hir frendes soules as wel olde as yonge.
'Ye, whan that they ben hastily ysonge,
'(Not for to hold a preest jolif and gay;
'He singeth not but o masse on a day;)
'Delivereth out, quod he, anon, the soules.'
'Ful hard it is, with fleshhook, or with oules,
'To ben yclawed; or to bren, or bake,
'Now spede you hastily for Cristes sake.
And whan this frere had said all his entent,
With qui cum patre forth his way he went.

" And therefore telleth Christ often to his dis- CHAP. VII.
" ciples, that they should fear God above all,
" and fear nothing else. 'Truly, saith Christ,
" I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, fear
" not those who can destroy the body, and no
" more, but fear him who can destroy both body
" and soul in hell, yea I say, fear ye him.'
" Here Christ would that men should fear nothing,
" chiefly, but God, and the offending of him. For
" if men fear bodily pain and death, and therefore
" cease to tell openly the truth, they are with
" this unable to regain the bliss of Heaven. But
" if they say openly and steadily the truth of
" God, nothing may harm them so they keep pa-

Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem lest,
He went his way, no lenger wold he rest.
With scrippe, and tipped staf, ytucked hie:
In every hous he gan to pore and prie,
And begged mele and chese, or elles corn,
His felaw had a staf tipped with horn,
A pair of tables all of ivory,
And a pointel ypolished fetisly,—
And wrote alway the names, as he stood,
Of alle folk that yave hem any good,
Askaunce that he wolde for hem preye,
'Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt or reye,
'A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese;
'Or elles what you list, we may not chese
'A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny,
'Or yeve us of your braun, if he have any,
'A dagon of your blanket, leve dame!
'Our sustre dere! (lo, here I write your name,)
'Bacon or beef, or swiche thing as ye find.'
A sturdy harlot went hem, ay, behind,
That was her hostes man, and bare a sakke,
And what men gave hem laid it on his bakke,
And, whan that he was out at dore,—anon
He planed away the names everich on,
That he before had written in his tables,
He served him with nifles and with fables.

CHAP. VII.

"tience and charity." It was to comfort his disciples in suffering, and especially in the season of persecution, that Christ reminded them of the Father's care as extending to the falling sparrow, and to the hairs of their head; "for thus should "they learn to believe that nothing comes without "his knowledge and his ordaining, and that it is "all for the best. He is also said to make his ser- "vants ready to die for his law by hope of reward, "when he saith thus, 'each who shall acknow- "ledge me before men, shall the Son of man "acknowledge before the angels.'"

The date of this production is certain, from its allusion to the papal schism, and to the controversy respecting the eucharist.[20] A few months only had elapsed from the time of its publication when the instructions of Urban, with a view to destroy the power of his rival, called the mendicant orders into new activity and importance. It was their labour and artifice, which did most toward involving the states of Christendom, in all the calamities of a religious war. Their ardour to crowd the ranks of the crusaders, roused the indignation of the rector of Lutterworth, and during Spenser's adventure in Flanders, produced his treatise intitled, "Objections "to Freres," a work in which he has given his most complete view of the character, opinions, and manners peculiar to that class of men.[21]

His work intitled Objections to Freres.

It was near the same time that the reformer composed his important treatise called "The

[20] This is the tract in which the notice of archbishop Usher, already adverted to appears. See Vol. i. 288, 289.

[21] See Vol. i. 254—256.

CHAP. VII.

"Sentence of the Curse Expounded."[22] The war in Flanders, waged "for the love of two "false priests, who are open antichrists," is noticed in the sixteenth chapter, as still in progress. The date of the work is thus determined. It is divided into twenty-nine chapters, and extends to a hundred quarto pages. As its title imports, its design is to expound the doctrine of spiritual censures.[23] Each chapter contemplates some well known application of this power; and while the authority itself is in some instances questioned, in others it is viewed as improperly exercised; and in others the men inflicting the supposed penalties are shewn to be themselves, and according to their own maxims, far greater offenders than the parties accursed. Thus the denunciation uttered four times a year against heretics, is considered as more justly incurred by the reigning clergy, than by any portion of the laity, if by heresy be meant, according to St. Austin, the maintenance of error against holy writ; and the anathemas pronounced on secular men who invade the property of the priesthood, are shewn to be much more applicable to churchmen themselves, who have assuredly contracted the guilt of estranging such

On the Sentence of the Curse Expounded.

[22] MS. C. C. Cambridge.

[23] The censures principally noticed in this exposition, are those which were pronounced in the service of every church four times a year. The form thus began; "I denounce, and showe for accursed, all tho that fraun-"chyse of holy chirche, bryke or dystrouble, or are agen the state of "holy chirche, or thereto assent with deed or counsele. And also all "tho that pryve holy chirche of any ryght, or make of holy chirche any "laye fee that is allowed or sanctified," &c. &c. Festival, fol. 200. Having in this manner protected the ecclesiastical state, the form proceeds to other matters.

CHAP. VII.

possessions from their original design. In this manner, the whole machinery of spiritual domination is scrutinized. In its details, as well as in its more general features, it is exhibited as arising from presumption and impiety; as tending to perpetuate the present character of the clergy; and to enslave and debase, every passion and faculty, in the soul of their victims. The solemn and often repeated counsel of the writer is, that men would study the will of God, and allow their apprehensions of good or evil to be affected by human authority, but as its exercise shall be known to accord with scriptures. The work, indeed, is replete with almost every sentiment, distinguishing the religion of the Bible from that of the papal power.

Of prelates, curates, and priesthood.

A few months only could have elapsed since publishing the above treatise, when the reformer composed his work "On Prelates,"[24] and a piece intitled, "How the Office of Curates is ordained of God," and another described as "For the Order of Priesthood." The first of these publications consists of forty-three chapters; the last, which is the shortest, extends to twenty-nine. The intention of the writer, is to state on the authority of scripture, the duties of the clergy sustaining the several ecclesiastical offices; to expose the frequent deficiences and devices, of the men on whom such responsibilities commonly devolved; and to point out the evils resulting from the degeneracy of churchmen, with respect both to the present and the future, to the people

[24] MS. C. C. Cambridge.

and themselves. In the next chapter some extracts will be given from each of these pieces, demonstrating the zeal with which Wycliffe continued to advocate the cause of enlightened piety, and of social improvement. CHAP. VII.

Another production which appeared about this time is worthy of notice, as elicited by the controversy which arose, respecting the vernacular scriptures, and as expressing the judgment of the reformer concerning the authority of tradition, and the infallibility of the church.[25] He commences by stating that "our Lord Jesus Christ, "ordained that his gospel should be fully known; "and maintained against heretics, and men out of "belief, by the writings of the four evangelists; "and that accordingly the devil, studieth by anti-"christ, and his false worldly clerks, to destroy "holy writ and the belief of christian men, by four "accursed methods or false reasonings. 1st, "that the church is of more authority and "credence than any gospel; 2nd, that Augus-"tine saith he would not believe in the gospel "if the church had not taught him so; 3rd, "that no man now alive knoweth which is the "gospel, except it be by an approval of the "church; 4th, and hence if men say that they "believe this to be the gospel of Matthew or "John, they do so for no cause but that the "church confirmeth it, and teacheth it." In support of the first assertion, it was usual to remark, that the supreme authority of the church

On the labour of antichrist and of his clerks to destroy holy writ, &c. &c.

[25] MS. C. C. Cambridge. "How antichrist and his clerks travail to destroy holy writ," &c. &c. &c.

CHAP. VII.

is evident from the fact, that in the early ages it devolved upon its members to distinguish between the true and the spurious gospels. But to this it is replied, that "these far-sighted heretics, "understand by the church the pope of Rome, "and his cardinals, and the multitude of worldly "priests, assenting to his simony and lordship "as above that of all the kings and emperors of "this world. It were not to their purpose else, "thus to magnify the church." It is contended, however, that ecclesiastics alone do not constitute the church, and if they did, the pastors of primitive times are described as men of "holy life, and moved by the Holy Ghost," whereas the clergy of later ages too often betray their contempt of every thing deserving the name of devotion. Still they claim the homage due to infallible guides; but it is argued that to concede their pretensions must be to share in the guilt of their presumption and impiety. The term church, as used by Augustine, is interpreted as referring but "to Christ, the head of holy church, to the "saints in Heaven, and to the apostles." The men who assert that the most illustrious of the fathers "would not have believed the gospel of "Jesus Christ, unless the accursed multitude of "worldly clerks had approved it," are described as adhering to this artifice for the purpose of "coloring their own false understanding and "heresy, by the name of that holy doctor." For "by this means, the clerks of antichrist condemn "the faith of christian men, and the command-"ments of God, and the doctrines of charity; "and bring in their own wayward laws."

" therefore christian men should stand to the
" death for the maintenance of Christ's gospel,
" and for the true understanding thereof obtained
" by holy life and great study!"

The four assertions above stated, are viewed as the four wheels, which chiefly accelerate the car of antichrist through the world; and in meeting the two remaining objections, the writer affirms in powerful language, that the most obscure student of the bible may find in that book a more certain guide to truth, than in the pontiffs or in the wisest of their councils. "Christian men," he observes, "are certain of the reality of "their faith by the gracious gift of Jesus Christ; "and that the truth in the gospel was taught by "Christ and his apostles, though all the clerks of "antichrist say the contrary never so fast, and on "pain of their curse, and imprisonment, and "burning. And this faith is not grounded on the "pope and his cardinals, for then it must fail, and "be undone, as they fail and are sometimes "destroyed; but it rests on Jesus Christ, God "and man, and on the Holy Trinity, and so it "may never fail except from his default, who "while he should love and serve God, faileth in "these things. Almighty God, and his truth are "the foundation of the faith of christian men; "and as St. Paul saith, 'other foundation may "no man set beside that which is set, that is, "Jesus Christ.' Therefore, though antichrist "and all his clerks were buried deep in hell "for their simony and pride, and other sins; yet "the faith of the christian faileth not, because "these are not the ground thereof, but Jesus

CHAP. VII.

Christ. He is our God, and our best Master; "and ever ready to teach true men all things "which are profitable, and needful to their souls. "But they would have, that whatever these prelates teach openly and maintain stedfastly, were "as of great authority, and even more than is the "gospel of Christ. And thus they would destroy "holy writ, and christian faith, and at length "maintain that whatever they do is no sin. But "christian men receive their faith of God, as "his gracious gift. He giveth them the knowing, "and the understanding of truths, needful to save "their souls; giving them grace to assent in "their heart to those truths. And if antichrist "say that each man may pretend that he has a "right faith, and a good understanding of holy "writ when he is in error; we answer, let a man "seek in all things truly the honor of God, and "live justly to God and man; and to him, God "will not fail in any thing that is needful, neither "in faith nor understanding, nor in answer against "his enemies." He concludes by praying "that "God Almighty would strengthen his little flock "against antichrist, that they may seek truly the "honor of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of the "souls of men; that they may despise antichrist's "boasting and pretended power, and willingly "and even joyfully suffer pain and reproach in "the world for the name of Jesus Christ and his "gospel; affording a steady example to others "to follow them, so as to conquer the high bliss "of heaven by glorious martyrdom, as other saints "before them have done. Jesu! for thy endless "might, endless wisdom, endless goodness, and

"charity, grant to us sinful wretches this love of "thee. Amen." CHAP. VII.

There is yet one composition belonging to this period, which must obtain a passing notice. It is on "the seven deadly sins," in treating of which the reformer adverts to the crusade against the antipope, and delivers some novel sentiments on the practice of war. The treatise consists of about eighty quarto pages, and, as its title will indicate, it touches on a variety of topics.* By dividing the members of the visible church into three classes, the writer is enabled to shew how the same forbidden passions were operating through the different portions of society; but the chief peculiarity of the work, is its announcement of those humane doctrines with respect to war, which have been advocated with no mean ability, in more recent times, by the disciples of Penn, and Barclay. The doctrine of the contemporary clergy is said to be, "that it is lawful "to annoy an enemy in whatever way you can." But it is remarked, that "the charity of Christ "forbiddeth the contrary." Nevertheless, "to keep "men fighting, though humanity teaches that men "should not fight, antichrist argues, that as an "adder by his nature stings a man who treads on "him, why should not we fight against our "enemies, especially as they would hence destroy "us, and ruin their own souls? It is for love, "therefore, that we chastise them. But what man "that hath wit, cannot see this fallacy?" Treatise on the seven deadly sins.

* MS. Bibl. Bodl. The same topics occur in the third book of his Trialogus, and are treated in the same manner.

CHAP. VII.

With respect to all offensive wars, he thus writes. "As to the title of conquest, we should "understand that if God enjoin conquest, it may "then be lawful, as in the case of the children "of Israel. When a kingdom by sin has for- "feited, against its chief Lord Christ, in punish- "ment of such trespass, he may give it to another "people. But men should not dream that a "people have so sinned, and that God will thus "punish them, except God tell it them." If to this it be objected that the pope approves crusades, it is urged in reply, that as St. Peter could err, his successor may perhaps be found to inherit his infirmity in that respect along with his power. It is admitted that under the law devout men were soldiers, but it is remarked that they fought with God's enemies to avenge God's injuries, and for no other cause; and whatever hostility is commenced without a special commission from above, is declared to be no less criminal under the present dispensation, than it would have been under the jewish theocracy. An attention to this simple fact is noticed as including every thing necessary to realize the vision of the prophet, when men shall break their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruninghooks, and nations shall learn war no more.

With a view to shew, that the means of self-defence are not all relinquished by the man who considers an appeal to mortal conflict as in every case unlawful, it is observed, "that angels with- "stood fiends, and many men with right of law "withstand their enemies, and yet they kill

"them not, neither fight with them. The wise men of the world hold this for wisdom, and have thus vanquished their enemies without striking them, and men of the gospel, by patience, and the prospect of rest and peace, have vanquished through the suffering of death just as we may do now. But here men of the world come and say, that by this wise, kingdoms would be destroyed; but here our faith teaches, that since Christ is our God, kingdoms should be thus established and their enemies overcome. But peradventure some men would lose their worldly riches—and what harm were thereof? Well, indeed, I know that men will scorn this doctrine; but men who would be martyrs for the law of God, will hold thereby. Lord, what honor falls to a knight that he kills many men; the hangman killeth many more, and with a better title; better were it for men to be butchers of beasts, than butchers of their brethren!"[m] As according to "common law, no man will make battle, except he have leave from the prince of the people, so, it is observed, no man should take vengeance unless God move him, and warn him as his instrument, saying, how he will have vengeance." Even knights, though "approved of God to defend his church by strength," are regarded as under the inhibition, "to kill no man."

While such were the reformer's sentiments on war in general, the reader will expect his loud condemnation of the martial enterprise entrusted

[m] MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. ix. 109.

CHAP. VII.

to the bishop of Norwich. It is thus, he refers to it. "Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts "his own life for the saving of the sheep. But "antichrist is a wolf of ravening, for he ever "does the reverse, putting many thousand lives "for his own wretched life. By forsaking things "which Christ has bid his priests forsake, he "might end all this strife. Why is not he a "fiend, stained foul with homicide, who though "a priest, fights in such a cause? If man-"slaying in others be odious to God, much more "in priests, who should be the vicars of Christ. "And I am certain that neither the pope, nor "all the men of his council, can produce a spark "of reason to prove that he should do this."[28] To his flock at Lutterworth, he farther observes, "friars "now say that bishops can fight best of all men, "and that it falleth most properly to them, since "they are lords of all this world. Thus, they "say, Macabeus fought, and Christ bade his "disciples sell their coats, and buy them swords, "but whereto, if not to fight? Thus friars make "a great array, and stir up many men to fight. "But Christ taught not his apostles to fight "with a sword of iron, but with the sword of "God's word, which standeth in meekness of "heart, and in the prudence of man's tongue. "And as Christ was the meekest of men, so he "was most drawn from the world, and would not "judge or divide a heritage among men, and yet "he could have done that best." Such facts are said to deserve the attention "of these two

[28] MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl.

"popes, when they fight one with the other, "with the most blasphemous leasings that ever "sprang out of hell. But they were occupied "many years before in blasphemy, and in sinning "against God and his church. And this made "them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse, "when he beginneth to stumble, lasteth in his "stumbling until he casts himself down."[29]

It thus appears that it was not merely the act of invasion, but the slaughter of men under any circumstances, which the reformer considered as opposed to the genius and the letter of christianity. It is also evident, that he was aware of the opposition and contempt, which the advocates of such opinions must encounter, so long as the state of the world should continue to be, at all such, as it had hitherto been. But the New Testament was before him, and that volume was understood as requiring that each professor of the gospel, should adhere to such modes of resistance only, as are there prescribed, or as occur in the recorded example of Christ, and of his apostles. Such, it was urged, is the pattern, and such are the commands of the Redeemer; and his injunctions in this particular, were considered as clearly expressive of his benevolence; since the evils to be anticipated from adhering to them, were believed to be trivial, when compared with those which had so commonly attended, the schemes of conquest, vain-glory, and revenge, from which wars have their origin. The virtues of the laws of retaliation had been long since ascertained,

[29] Ibid.

CHAP. VII.

and the experiment of the effect to be produced by the pacific temper which the gospel enjoins, was said to have been successfully made in the early, and better ages of the church. Men were therefore exhorted to renounce those brute methods of adjusting disputes, which had not only incurred the severest of their present privations, and inflicted the deepest of their present woes, but which had so often proved the grave of every virtue, and the parent of every crime. The disastrous influence of war on civilization, and literature, and liberty, the reformer could deplore; but its demoralizing effects, and the desolation which it forebodes with respect to eternity, filled his mind with emotions of amazement and horror.

Extracts from Wycliffe's later sermons.

The passage last cited from the pen of the reformer, is from one in a series of sermons, delivered to the parishioners of Lutterworth subsequent to the opening of 1382. There is much in those compositions, serving to disclose the feeling and purpose of the preacher, at this important period of his history; and as these productions are at present unknown to the public, a few characteristic extracts will not perhaps be unacceptable to the reader. While so determined a foe of the practice of war, the conflict in aid of truth and piety is one in which he would have all the capabilities of men employed, and of this he frequently speaks in such language as the foliowing. "The captain "of our battle is Christ, both God and man; "who hath the lordship of all this world, being "the Lord of lords. What good knight then "should dread him to fight in the armies of this

" Lord? From the words of Paul it followeth, " that he is of more power than all the fiends " that are in hell, or aught that may oppose him. " And since he overcame the fiend who is the " head of the contrary battle, he hath virtue by " his manhood to overcome all the enemies of his " spiritual knights. In this, the knights of " Christ's battle should be comforted, so as to " fight in his cause, and therefore Paul biddeth " us take our arms in God's name,"[30] Adverting to the promise of the Saviour, which affirms that " his servant shall be there both in bliss and " place where he is without end," it is observed that men should accordingly be prepared " to fol- " low Christ, although it be hard." The substance of his doctrine on this important branch of christian obligation is thus stated. " Certainly " man should more love his soul than his body: " and always should he most love God, and his " law: and whoever so loveth these, is ready to " suffer the death of his body, for the love of his " God."[31]

The lecture following that from which the last extract is taken, is described as teaching " as " the former doth, how a man should ordain " himself to suffer martyrdom." It relates chiefly to the text, " Whosoever loseth his life for my " sake and the gospel's shall save it;" and the preacher remarks, " since the life of man is or- " dained of God, evermore to be, it is not lost " to God, but he for whom this life is lost keepeth " it well, and giveth it him in bliss in the other

[30] Ibid. 109. [31] Ibid. 130.

CHAP. VII.

"world. And who would not thus traffic with "his own life?" To hesitate, is "to fail in "charity, and in the first commandment," and to make light of the promises which speak of the glorious things to be accomplished in the saints, when their Lord shall appear in his kingdom to beautify the bodies which have been yielded as a sacrifice to him.[32]

On another occasion he describes the gospel for the day as "telling to the martyrs of Christ, "what perils shall befall his house," and the persecutions foretold as to come upon his disciples, are said to be at present inflicted on good men. "They shall put them into holds falsely, "and shall punish them many ways. And often "shall they draw them to kings, and to justices "who are mighty in this world, and thus for "Christ shall they be punished. And like to "this falleth now, by the punishings of antichrist. "But Jesus saith to his disciples, that it shall "fall to them for a witness that they are on the "true side. That they shall have a clear answer "to give, which all their adversaries shall not in "any way withstand, and this shall be from the "love of God coming so openly to them." But this experience of the divine approbation, is said to be unknown to the ruling clergy, their propensities being in general too earthly to allow of their cherishing the communications of heavenly wisdom. "If a prelate feign that he hath "power and wit given of God to rule his church, "and doth all amiss in such things, following not

[32] Ibid.

"God nor his law, certainly such a hypocrite "uttereth first a falsehood, and by his treachery "he leadeth the sheep of Christ amiss. And "though the wasting of God's goods be the worst "of sins, because his goods are best, yet men "that should be martyrs are so smitten with "cowardice, that they dare not speak a word "for right belief in this matter, but as though "men were beasts, do they constrain them to "assent to falsehood as true. Such are many of "the blasphemies and falsehoods invented by "popes and other prelates; and whoever in Christ "opposeth them, he may be a martyr if he dare. "And better cause of martyrdom to God's ser- "vants find we none. For as the maintaining "of faith is the cause of martyrdom, so the main- "tenance of things which are not of faith should "be reversed by christian men, for else might "all faith be changed, the old put out and new "brought in. Thus they say, that it is of faith "that the pope is head of holy church, and that "whatsoever thing he affects to do, is performed "of Christ, but a more perilous heresy was never "feigned by the fiend."[33] In the sermon concluding thus, the doctrines of the pope's supremacy and infallibility, which are so strongly rejected, are noticed as forming the pressing questions of the orthodox.[34]

---

[33] Ibid. 139.

[34] In another instance he thus complains of priests, as having taken away the key of knowledge and substituted their own tradition in the place of the scripture. "Since the kindred of the fiend is now most "among priests, as it was in the time of Christ, true men should speak "to them sharply as Christ did. For they have exiled the law of God

CHAP. VII.

On the text "Blessed are ye that weep now, for "you shall laugh," he thus writes; "It is known "that whosoever truly loveth God's law, must "needs weep here over the enemies of Christ. "For these who are God's servants, will be perse- "cuted here for reproving of sinners who are "God's enemies. But he is a coward against "God who speaketh not boldly against sin. And "therefore John the Baptist and Christ's apos- "tles took example of Christ, and thus they wept "always over sin. And since Christ in his three "weepings wept for other men's sins, he loveth "not Christ and his mother well, who sorroweth "not for the injury and despite that is done to "them But such as do this are men of charity, "and shall rejoice at the day of doom." The various sufferings, which attended the profession of a scriptural creed in the age of Wycliffe, are thus described. "Worldly men avoid such pro- "fessors, and leave them to themselves. They are "accursed of antichrist; are put out of churches; "and are parted in prisons from other men of the

---

"by which they should work, and brought in the fiend's law by which "they now govern. Christ often says how the lawyers watched him, "that they might take something of his words to accuse him, and so "doom him to death, and thus did those hypocrites pretend to fulfil "the law. And thus it is at this day among these high-priests; for they "have new laws made beside God's law, by which to doom men to "death as open heretics. To this doing they council not with God's "law, but with established heresies which themselves hold, viz. that "they may not sin nor err in such judgments. But all manner of men, "who say that they should follow Christ's life, and leave their worldly "life, they judge for heretics. But if they thus give themselves to lord- "ships, forsaking the life of Christ, they are fiend's children and open "antichrists. Christ's children they may not be, but if they follow him, "and especially hold themselves in meekness and poverty. And here "we may know men whether they dare be masters." Ibid. 145.

" world; and in all these states, they suffer re-
" proofs. But if they are certain from the matter
" of their belief, that in all this they suffer for the
" cause of their God, they may be blessed and
" joyful in hope of their end; even as a sick man,
" will gladly suffer pain, when he hopeth thereby
" to come to health. And the joy which saints
" have when they suffer thus, is a manner of bliss
" which belongs to them here, and it is more of
" joy to them, than all their worldly desires. Christ
" also telleth, that those who stand in his cause,
" have their names cast out as cursed men and
" heretics. So blind are their enemies, and so
" deep in their sin, that they call good evil, and
" evil good. But woe be to such! And Christ
" biddeth his servants rejoice in that day in their
" heart, and to shew a glad countenance to men
" that be about them, for certainly their mede
" is much in the kingdom of heaven. And this
" word comforteth simple men, who are called
" heretics, and enemies to the church, because
" they tell the law of God. For they are sum-
" moned and reproved in many ways, and are
" after put in prison, and burnt or killed as
" though worse than thieves. And the masters
" in this persecuting, are priests, high and low,
" and mostly friars; as Christ was persecuted
" by Caiaphas, and other priests, but especially
" by the pharisees. To all thus persecuted, this
" gospel is a comfort, for as certainly as tra-
" ditions made beside the law of God, by priests,
" and scribes, and pharisees, blinded them in
" that law, and made it despised,—so it is now
" by the new laws of men called decretals and

CHAP. VII.

"decrees—but a remedy against this abuse, and "one used of many men is, to despise all such "laws when they are alleged; and to say unto "men who allege them, that their honesty is "more suspected for their citing of such laws, "since God's law telleth all truth that is needful "to man."[35]

It is in the following language that the reformer expresses his confidence in the power of truth, and as to the issue of every conflict sustained in its cause. "Men should not fear, "except on account of sin, or the losing of virtues; "since pain is just, and according to the will of "God, and the truth is stronger than all their "enemies. Why then should men fear or sorrow "for it? The prophet bid his servant that he "should not fear, because many more were with "them than with the contrary part. Let a man "stand in virtue and truth, and all this world "overcometh him not; for if they overcome him "with these, then they overcome God and his "angels, and then they should make him to be "no God.—Thus good men are comforted to put "away fear, since be they never so few nor "feeble, they believe that they may not be dis-"comfited. Thus the words of Christ make his "knights to be hardy."[36]

One extract more, must suffice to exhibit the temper with which the reformer continued to the last to discharge his duties; and the firmness, with which he constantly anticipated the infliction of the worst evils, that his fidelity might be found to

[35] Ibid. 136. [36] Ibid. 166.

provoke. "Know we not, that Peter wist well "how he should spend God's treasure, so as to "profit his church? Who dare then put on "Peter the charge, that he was negligent in "this, that he spared that treasure of God which "popes now wisely dispense? All men, therefore, "but especially prelates, should oversee their "state and their life, whether it be according to "God's law, or after the customs of the fiend. "Such a reckoning every man should make, every "day of his life; for this is a common word with "many saints, 'each time that God hath given "thee, will he ask full sharply as to how thou "hast spent it, whether well in his service or "amiss.' That reckoning should each man fear, "but especially high-priests, for their office is "more perilous. And however men feign, their "office is told in the law of Christ, how they "should be occupied in three things as shepherds. "They should wisely lead their sheep into the "sound pastures, of God's law, and always put "their own life to save their sheep against wolves. "And these shepherds should not flee in the time "when thieves slay the sheep, nor covet more the "wool than they covet their soul's health, for that "is the wolf's intent. If it be thus they take the "office of shepherds, then are they wolves from "the beginning. It follows then, that the time "spent in labouring for high estate, for riches, or "any other than God's worship for the profit of "their sheep, by the rules of God's law, is time "wasted." The preacher concludes a series of similar admonitions by observing that "such "oversight of our life, and especially of high

CHAP. VII.

CHAP. VII.

"prelates helpeth the church, and maketh men "to fear God and serve him well." The rector of Lutterworth could not be insensible, while reiterating these severe maxims on the various points of christian and clerical obligation, that the strictest comparisons would be frequently made between his published sentiments, and his general conduct. In the case of such a man, the only conclusion to be fairly adopted is, that his daily practice was such as fully accorded with his public instructions.

We are now approaching the close of the reformer's history, and the passages from his writings which have occurred, must afford sufficient proof, that, as the evening of life was felt to be descending upon him, his devout anticipations of future repose, his zeal in the cause of christian reformation, and his feelings as to the penalties which persecution might award to him, were all greatly purified and elevated. To oppose the errors which time, and custom, and law had established; and to publish aloud the truths contained in the christian scriptures; he affirms to be the imperative obligation of every christian man, and to be such notwithstanding the evils incurred, should be scorn and poverty, imprisonment and death. The course of activity, which would assuredly bring these consequences along with it, is variously and minutely described; and is strictly that, which formed the daily employment of the rector of Lutterworth. It was therefore in constant expectation, that the cell of the convict, and the horrors of the stake, would ere long be added to the contumely and

poverty of his allotment, that the closing years of his life were passed. His auditors well knew, that no wrath could equal that, which would be certainly excited, by his opposing the mass of those fictions in relation to the soul and the future, which had enabled the priesthood to attract to themselves their vast possessions and their secular power. Those fictions were nevertheless assailed, and the purposes to which they were applied, are described as those which could prove ensnaring but to the children of antichrist. While nations are called upon, to reject much of that spiritual authority which their religious guides had assumed; their rulers are urged, as they would escape at the day of doom, to divest that class of men of the needless wealth, and of that vain authority, which certain delusive tenets had enabled them to acquire; and which according to the scriptures, were daily exposing the blind and their leaders to the same pit of destruction. The language of his conduct, amid the growing power of his enemies, would seem to be to this effect. "To live, and to be silent is, with me, impos-"sible—the guilt of such treason against the "Lord of Heaven is more to be dreaded than "many deaths. Let the blow therefore fall. "Enough I know of the men whom I oppose, of "the times on which I am thrown, and of the "mysterious providence which relates to our "sinful race, to expect that the stroke will ere "long descend. But my purpose is unalterable. "I wait its coming!"

The temper of his chief opponents was sufficiently known, to satisfy him that the con

CHAP. VII.

tinuance of his personal liberty, and even of life, arose less from their inclination than from their weakness.[37] But his anticipation of a season, in which their power would be equal to their malice, were not to be realized. The fact admits of explanation. It was known, that the duke of Lancaster still entertained a favorable judgment of his character; the papal schism absorbed the attention of the pontiffs; and the domestic disquietudes in this country, had long rendered the factions who governed it, in a great degree fearful of each other. In addition to these causes, as serving to delay the introduction of more sanguinary persecutions, the declining health of the reformer should be noticed. It was probable that his career would soon terminate: and with him, his partisans, may have been expected to disappear. Previous to his death, he needed the assistance of a curate in performing his parochial duties. In this infirm state, however, he continued at times to officiate; and he is said to have been employed in administering the bread of the eucharist, when assailed by his last sickness. The paralysis which now seized his frame, deprived him at once of consciousness, and after a short struggle, issued in the removal of his devout spirit to the abode of natures more congenial with his own. This event happened on the last day of December, in the year 1384.[38] Many

[37] MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum. In the Trialogus, Truth remarks that a great number of the religious, and of the people called christians, were accustomed to declaim against the doctrine of the reformer, "studying in a thousand ways to deprive him of life." iv. c. 4.

[38] See the extract from the Bokyngham Register, Vol. I. 328, 329, and Walsingham, Hypod. Neust. From Walsingham, and from the Teign-

good men have prayed to be called to their rest, while thus occupied. We know not that it was so with Wycliffe: but we know that he was taken "from the evil to come." It is not the province of the biographer, to supply the deficiencies in his materials, from the stores of his imagination, or we might dwell on the probabilities of the spectacle exhibited, in the death chamber, and the burial scene of such a man! We leave his enemies to indulge their feeling of triumph, and his followers to mourn a loss, which no second man was to supply. Some farther observations, on the character of this much-injured confessor; and on the influence of his doctrine, with respect to the reformation of the sixteenth century, will be found in a subsequent chapter of this volume. But before proceeding to those topics, it will be proper to take a more complete, and a more connected view, of the opinions which he laboured to propagate.

---

mouth chronicle, it appears that the attack of palsy took place on the 29th of the month—the festival of Thomas-a-Becket, and his death on the 31st. the day consecrated to the memory of Silvester, and it is observed by Walsingham, that against both of these saints the reformer often directed his blasphemies. Of Silvester, however, he frequently spoke with respect, but the saintship of Becket he treated with contempt. Lewis, c. vii. Trial. iv. c. 17. Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE

OPINIONS OF JOHN WYCLIFFE, D. D.

DESIGN OF THE CHAPTER——THE DOCTRINE OF WYCLIFFE RESPECTING THE POPE'S TEMPORAL POWER——THE SECULAR EXEMPTIONS OF THE CLERGY——THE GENERAL AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTRATE——THE LIMITS OF THAT AUTHORITY——THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE MAGISTRATE WITH RESPECT TO THE CHURCH——THE CUSTOMS OF PATRONAGE——TITHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL ENDOWMENTS——THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMER'S THEORY DERIVED IN PART FROM THE EXISTING SYSTEM——HIS REVERENCE FOR THE PRIESTLY OFFICE——HIS JUDGMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY PRIESTHOOD——A SUMMARY OF HIS DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AND CLERICAL REVENUE——HIS OPINIONS RELATING TO SIMONY——THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE POPE——THE HIERARCHY——THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS——THE NATURE OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH——THE POWER OF THE KEYS——PURGATORY AND MASSES FOR THE DEAD——THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS——THE WORSHIP OF IMAGES——CONFESSION——THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCES——THE CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY——THE SACRAMENTS——TRANSUBSTANTIATION——PUBLIC WORSHIP——SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT——A SUMMARY OF HIS THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE.

CHAP. VIII.

Design of the chapter.

MANY of the doctrines peculiar to the creed of Wycliffe, have been introduced in the preceding chapters, and in the order in which they appear in his writings. But in some instances they have obtained a passing notice only; and in every case, they admit of a more complete illustration from the Wycliffe manuscripts, and of a more advantageous exhibition as connected with the reformer's general doctrine. There are also certain of his opinions, relating both to doctrine and dis-

CHAP. VIII.

cipline, which have not obtained any place in our narrative.

Doctrine of Wycliffe on the pope's temporal power.

The parties who, during the middle ages, were most offended by the false doctrines, or by the political encroachments of the papacy; and whose efforts were to issue, in so great a diminution of its opulence and power; are found, in general, directing their first and most vigorous attacks, against its latest corruptions. These could not be readily shielded by the plea of ancient custom. Forming also, as they did, the more recent measures of a power, which had long dispensed with the restraints of modesty in urging its demands, both their origin and their character, were commonly such, as to admit of being easily exposed. Among the assumptions of this class, those which relate to the doctrine of the pope's temporal power, claim our first attention. It is not surprising, that the modern catholic, whose creed has been so materially affected by the progress of society, should regret the prominence conferred by protestant historians on this feature in the history of the Romish church. The facts, however, which it includes, afford those illustrations of human character, and of the necessary tendencies of the system producing them, which are too instructive to be wholly forgotten. The avowed successors of the Galilean fisherman, have gravely assumed an authority over all worlds; disposing at pleasure of the crowns and kingdoms of the present, and of the weal or woe pertaining to the future! To prevent the return of any similar tyranny, it is important that this scheme of successful ambition, should be frequently de-

picted in its native colours. That every political government is, and ought to be subject to the dominion of the spiritual church, is taught by Baronius as a verity that should never have been questioned. Nor is there any real difference between this opinion, and that expressed by Bellarmine, as the general doctrine of catholics in his day.[1] From Wycliffe's defence of the english parliament, in abolishing the census which had been extorted from king John, it appears, that previous to the year 1366, he had learnt to discard this preposterous claim as novel, fraudulent, and impious. It was in consequence of his political interferences founded on this doctrine, that the bishop of Rome became, in the language of our reformer, "the evil man-slayer, poisoner, and "burner of the servants of Christ." He complains indignantly of the men who profess to regard "this root of all the misgovernance in "the church, as the head of holy church, and as "the most holy father who may not sin." With equal regret he observes, "that if men foolishly "make a vow to go to Rome, Jerusalem, or "Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, that "they will value more than the great vow to keep "God's commandments, and to forsake the fiend "and all his works, which was made at their "christening. And if a man break the highest "commands of God, the rudest parish priest "shall absolve him anon; but of the vows made "from our own head, though many times against "the will of God, no man shall absolve, except

[1] Apologia. c. 13. Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy, p. 6.

CHAP. VIII.

"a great worldly bishop, or the most worldly "priest of Rome—the master of the emperor— "the fellow of God—the Deity on earth!" While the reformer thus applied his rebukes, to the monarch of that worldly kingdom which had been introduced into the church; it is in the following language, that he adverts to the conduct of its subordinate partisans. "Commonly, the new "laws which the clergy have made, are cunningly "devised to bring down the power of lords "and kings which God ordained, and to make "themselves lords, and to have all things at their "doom. Certainly it seemeth, that these worldly "prelates, would more completely destroy the "power of kings and lords which God ordained "for the government of christian men, than God "destroyeth the power even of the fiend. For "God, in setting a term which Satan may do "and no more, still suffereth his power to last "for the profit of christian men, and the just "punishment of evil doers. But these worldly "clerks, would never cease if unchecked, until "they had destroyed kings and lords with their "regalia and power."[2]

On the secular exemptions of the clergy.

It was not unusual, however, in the ages before Luther, for ecclesiastics who denied the authority of the popes as extending immediately over the monarchs and the kingdoms of the world, to admit its validity in relation to the property of their own order. To escape the exactions of princes, churchmen had frequently ventured to plead this claim of their spiritual sovereign. But it was

[2] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded. c. 3. 6. 11. See also Vol. I. c. ii.

among the early doctrines of Wycliffe, that on all questions respecting either the wealth, or the civil relations of the clergy, the authority of the magistrate should be final. "Worldly clerks "and feigned religions," he observes, "break "and destroy the king's peace, and his realm. "For the prelates of this world, and the priests, "high and low, say freely, and write in their "law, that the king hath no jurisdiction nor "power over their persons, nor over the goods "of holy church. And yet Christ and his apostles "were most obedient to kings and lords, and "taught all men to be subject to them, and to "serve them truly and cheerfully in bodily works, "and to fear them, and honor them above all "other men. The wise king Solomon also, put "down a high bishop who was unfaithful to him "and his kingdom, and exiled him, and ordained "a good priest in his room, as the book of Kings "telleth. And Jesus Christ paid tribute to the "emperor, and commanded men to pay him "tribute. St. Peter also commandeth christian "men to be subject to every ordinance of man, "whether unto the king as more high than others, "or unto dukes, as sent of him to the vengeance "of evil doers, and the praising of good men. "Also St. Paul commandeth by the authority of "God, that 'every soul be subject to the higher "powers, for there is no power but of God. "Princes are not to the dread of good works, but "of evil. Wilt thou not dread the power?—do "good, and thou shalt have praise of the same, "for he is God's minister to thee for good. If "thou hast done evil, assuredly thou shouldst

CHAP. VIII.

CHAP. VIII.

"fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain. "Therefore ye must needs be subject, not only "for wrath, but also for conscience. For therefore "ye give tribute, they being the ministers of "God serving to this same thing. Therefore "yield ye to all men's debts, to whom tribute, "tribute; to whom toll, toll; to whom dread, "dread; to whom honor, honor.' Our Saviour, "Jesus Christ, meekly suffered a painful death "under Pilate, not excusing himself from that "jurisdiction by virtue of his office. And St. "Paul professed himself ready to suffer death, "by the doom of the emperor's justice, if he were "worthy of death, as the deeds of the apostles "teach. And Paul appealed to the heathen "emperor, from the priests of the jews, to be under "his jurisdiction, and so to save his life.[3] Lord, "who hath made our worldly clergy exempt "from the king's jurisdiction, and chastening, "since God hath given kings this office over all "misdoers. Clerks, and particularly high-priests, "should be most meek and obedient to the laws "of this world, as were Christ and his apostles; "and thus be a mirror to all men, that they may "yield this meekness and obedience to the king, "and to his righteous laws. What sturdy robbers "and traitors then, are these to lords and kings "in refusing this obedience, and in thus giving "an example to all the men of the land to become "rebels against the king and the lords. For in "this, and in what they teach, they instruct the

[3] It was thus the reformer would vindicate his own appeal to the same authority. See chap. iii. 83, 84.

" commons of the land, both in words and deeds, " to be unfaithful and rebellious against the king. " And this seemeth well, according to their new " law of decretals, where proud clerks have or- " dained that our clergy shall pay no subsidy nor " tax, nor any thing for the keeping of our king " and our realm without assent from the worldly " priest of Rome. And yet many times this " proud worldly priest is an enemy of our land, " and secretly maintaining our enemies in war " against us, with our own gold. Thus an alien " priest, and the proudest of all priests, they " make the chief lord over the whole of the goods " which clerks possess in this kingdom, and that " is the greater part thereof. And where are " there greater traitors, either to God, or holy " church, and especially to our liege lord and his " kingdom? An alien, worldly priest, and an " enemy to us, is made chief lord over the greater " part of our country!"[4]

To this decisive passage, others of the same import, and equally bold in their character, might be added. In a subsequent chapter of the same work, the writer has supposed a number of extreme cases, with a view to exhibit more vividly the evils which must be inseparable from these clerical exemptions. Thus he remarks,—should churchmen refuse the payment of the most lawful debts, such is the nature of the immunities which they claim, that no lay authority would be left to enforce it; and were this privileged class to determine on conveying the whole of their wealth

[4] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 11.

CHAP. VIII.

to another soil, the nation may do nothing to prevent a measure, which, if adopted, must reduce it to poverty. For the same reason, it is argued, were the clergy to conspire the death of the king, of the court, and of the nobility of the realm, neither the monarch nor the aristocracy, might punish these daring delinquents, with the smallest possible forfeiture of liberty or goods. To such uncourtly extremes, indeed, is the reformer carried by the warmth of his indignation, that he ventures to suppose the college of cardinals transformed into a regular banditti; and he enquires what the state of a people must be, who could be weak enough to believe that, to resist these holy depredators must be to incur the guilt of sacrilege, and the lowest perdition![5]

On the general authority of the magistrate.

But the reformer is said to have maintained a doctrine which has been sometimes designated, "dominion founded on grace." This article is described as hostile to every social institution; and as it was in consequence adapted to awaken the jealousy of the civil power, a cautious prominence was given to it by his adversaries. Woodford, employed whatever ingenuity he could

[5] MS. Ibid. c. 19. Dr. Lingard (Hist. iv. 262.) has cited the reformer's language in his Trialogus (iv. 18.) which expresses his doctrine respecting the duty of lords, to deprive a church habitually delinquent of her possessions; and has quoted an extract from the passage of which the substance is given in the text as showing that the writer "afterwards attempted to "explain it away." It remains however to be shown that "the Sentence "of the Curse Expounded," did not appear until *after* the Trialogus. It is certain, that they were published so nearly together, that the priority of either can be of no moment. A few months only could have intervened. The passage too, instead of being what Dr. Lingard insinuates, is one which as the reader will perceive, presents the most vigorous enforcement of the obnoxious article intended.

command, to make his refutation of the supposed heresy, as formal and imposing as possible. Subsequently, the fathers of the council of Constance, in their great care to preserve the regal authority from injury, placed this dangerous tenet under their anathema; and the cardinal Bellarmine, moved by the same solicitude, assures the king of England, that the doctrine which sanctifies the murder of princes, and which the monarch had inadvertently imputed to catholics, is the property of the innovaters, "certainly, of John "Wycliffe." But with the consistency which usually attends the defence of a bad cause, the enemies of the reformer have been no less forward on other occasions, in charging him with making the most flattering appeals to the secular authorities, in hope of arraying them against the power and possessions of the priesthood. If this was his design, and he has scarcely a foe who does not impute it to him, it is needless to enquire whether he could, for a moment, have regarded it as expedient, to become the abettor of any doctrine unfriendly to the influence of the civil power. In the very consistent language of party zeal, the sword of the magistrate was at once his idol, and his hatred; a weapon, which at one moment he would extend, far beyond the due sphere of its influence; and at another, consign to its scabbard, that every lawless passion might be loosened on the world. There are also other facts, which warrant a suspicion as to the fidelity, or the correct information, of the persons who dwell with such marked interest on the evils of the delinquency alleged. The authorities cited

CHAP. VIII.

by Wycliffe, in support of this tenet, whatever it was, are St. Augustine and St. Bernard, names which have not often commended themselves to the agents of political discord. And it is no less remarkable, that amid the voluminous works of the reformer, one only has been cited as really containing this alarming dogma. In his vernacular compositions—which were by far the greater number, and which were alone addressed to the people—it is not in more than two or three instances, that the remotest indication of it occurs. The reader will accordingly judge, of the force of that prejudice with which the memory of this good man has been assailed, when reminded that from the period of his death, to the present hour, this obnoxious speculation has been described as "his favorite maxim."[6]

[6] Such is Dr. Lingard's description of it. (Hist. iv.) The doctor also refers to the seventeeth chapter in the fourth book of the Trialogus, as containing this tenet. The passage in that chapter, which relates to it, is given below, and it will not perhaps occur to the reader as being very deeply charged either with theological or political heresy. "Titulo autem originalis justiciæ habuit christus omnia bona "mundi, ut sepæ declarat Augusti, illo titulo, vel titulo gratiæ justorum "sunt omnia, sed longe ab illo titulo civilis possessio. Unde Christus et "sui Apostoli spreta dominatione civili, fuerunt de habitione pure. Se-"cundum illum titulum contentati. Ideo regula Christi est, que nullus mo-"rum discipulorum presumat pro temporalibus suis contendere. Ut patet "Mat. vi. qui aufert quæ tua sunt ne repetas. Sed longe sunt leges "civilis et consuetudo dominantium seculariter ab ista sententia. Et "hæc ratio quare leges ista mundanæ et executio furiosa illarum, sunt "tam culpabiliter etiam inter clericos introductæ. Et patet que con-"clusio quam infers est concendenda, sed habitio distinguenda. Nam "habere civiliter cum necessitat ad solicitudinem circa temporalia et "leges hominum observandus, debet omino clericis interdici. Et quan-"tum ad Silvestrum et alios est mihi probabile, quæ in recepiendo "taliter dotationem graviter peccaverunt. Sed possumus supponere que "de hoc fructuose posterius pœnitebant. Et sic concendo tibi que licet "clericis habere temporalia, sed titulo et modo habendi quem deus "instituit," p. 129. From this passage it would appear that such was

Were it needful, it would not be difficult to collect a volume of extracts from his writings, to demonstrate that no doctrine was ever embraced by him in the least degree affecting the legal possession of property. He knew that many things may be lawful, as done by the Supreme Judge, which would be flagrant injustice, as performed by man, except in obedience to a mandate from above; and to illustrate his meaning, he appeals to the case of the Israelites and the nations of Canaan.[7] This distinction, however, which was never absent from the reformer's mind, appears

---

the faith of Wycliffe with regard to the mediation of Christ, that he considered every man as indebted to the grace of the Redeemer for the benefits of this world, no less than for the hope of a better; and that accordingly he viewed the sin which incurred the forfeiture of heaven, as separating the offender at the same moment from all claim, with respect to God, on the honors or possessions of the earth. Such is the theology of the scriptures. But it is insinuated, that the reformer proceeded from this general statement, to infer as a general consequence, that every such delinquent might be divested of property or office by the saints, as of things forfeited with respect to the supreme Lord. Could the rector of Lutterworth be shown to have adopted such a conclusion, it must have been in some moment of derangement. We are not dependant, however, on such a supposition. When this scene of probation shall reach its close, it will appear that the doctrine of Wycliffe, however much despised or calumniated, is a momentous truth, and that no dominion can have the element of duration but what is founded in grace. And though it was not his manner to blend the retributions of a future world with the arrangements peculiar to the present, he might deem it important, to admonish the worldly and the powerful as to the ground on which the adjustments of that great crisis will take place; assuring them, that the delay of those fearful decisions which will then be announced, arose less from any legal impediment, than from the long-suffering of God. The only notices, however, of this doctrine which I have met with in the reformer's writings, are in his answer to the question of Richard's first parliament, (i. c. iv.) in one of his homilies, (Bib. Reg. 97.) and in his treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins. In the first instance it is applied to the office and possessions of the clergy only; in the second it is merely a passing observation; and in the last it will be remembered as introduced to discountenance, and not to encourage an invasion of the rights of others. See c. vii.

[7] MS. on the Seven Deadly Sins. See chap. vii.

CHAP. VIII.

to have wholly escaped the discernment of his accusers. It is true, the churchman convicted of mortal sin, he viewed as having forfeited his office. In every such case, the office so degraded with its jurisdiction and its revenue, he would have transferred to other and more worthy hands; and this maxim it was, which brought upon him the reproach of favoring a disruption of the social system.[8] To save themselves from the consequences of this projected discipline, the clergy employed every conceivable device, to make it appear that the opinions of their assailant were revolutionary novelties, which must apply to civil, no less than to ecclesiastical offices, and prove as perilous to the possessions of the laity, as to those of the church.

It is in the following language, that Wycliffe complains of the injury thus done to himself and his followers. "Prelates slander poor priests, and "other christian men, saying, they will not obey "their sovereigns, nor fear the curse, nor keep the "laws, but despise all things that are not to their "liking; and that they are therefore worse than "jews or pagans; and that all lords and prelates, "and mighty men should destroy them, or else "they will destroy holy church, and make each "man to live as him liketh, and nothing may "more destroy Christendom."[9] In meeting these serious charges, it is admitted, that "the fiend "moveth some men to say, that christian men "should not be servants nor vassals to heathen

[8] See Vol. i. c. iv. p. 344—347.

[9] MS. De obedientia Prelatorum.

"lords, since they are false to God, and less worthy "than themselves. Neither should they be such "to christian lords, since they are brethren in "kind, and Jesus Christ bought christian men "on the cross, and made them free." In reply, however, it is observed, that "the apostles Peter "and Paul have written against this heresy in "God's law," and their various lessons on obedience to magistrates are so explained, as to favor a submission which, if faulty at all, is so from excess. Conscious of injury, it is with becoming feeling he remarks, "yet some men who are out "of charity, slander poor priests with this error, "namely, that servants or tenants may lawfully "withhold rents and services from their lords, "when lords are openly wicked in their living. "And they invent this treacherous falsehood "against poor priests, to make lords to hate them; "and not to maintain that truth of God, which "they teach openly for his honor, for the profit "of the realm, for the establishing of the king's "power, and the destroying of sin." He afterwards exposes the sophistry by which the enemies of the poor priests, frequently succeeded in procuring a currency for this slander among the laity. "The feigned reasoning of the clerks of "antichrist is this, if subjects may lawfully with-"draw tithes and offerings from curates who live "in open lechery, or in other great sins, and do "not the office; then servants and tenants, may "lawfully withdraw their service and rents from "their lords, who live openly an accursed life." In answer to this, it is stated, "that men are "charged of God, by St. Peter and St. Paul,

CHAP. VIII.

"to be thus subject to wicked lords; and therefore did Christ pay tribute for himself, and his apostles, to the heathen emperors. Yet we read not that he, or any apostle, paid tithes to the wicked high priests, after the time that he began to preach."[10]

On the limits of magisterial authority.

But while it is thus certain that no sanction of popular violence could be fairly extracted from the political creed of the reformer, he knew that the relation subsisting between the governing and the governed imposed reciprocal obligations. Hence, as the latter are cautioned against the evils of insubordination, and restricted to the use of rational and constitutional means in seeking the redress of grievances; the former are reminded, that they are the recognised ministers of God, in the use, and not in the abuse of their power; the extent in which they prove a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those who do well, being that of their real claims on the attachment of the people. He therefore proceeds so far as to assert, that while by the force of some human institution, the name of king, prince, or lord, may be retained in favor

[10] MS. Of servants and lords how each should keep his degree. This treatise, and the Trialogus, appeared about the same time. The following passage is a just specimen of the reformer's manner in treating of social obligations as devolving on the important class of persons to which it is addressed. "If thou art a labourer live in meekness, and truly and cheerfully do thy labour, that if thy lord or thy master be a heathen man, he, by thy meekness, and cheerful and true service, may have nought to grudge against thee, nor to slander thy God nor Christendom. And to a christian lord serve not with grudging; nor only in his presence, but truly and cheerfully and in his absence. And not only for worldly dread, or worldly reward, but for the fear of God and conscience, and a reward in heaven. For that God who appointeth thee to such service, knoweth which state is best for thee, and will reward thee more than all other lords may do if thou doest thy service truly and cheerfully for the sake of his ordinance." MS. A Short Rule of Life, &c.

of men who indulge in wrongs and extortions," such rulers, are in truth, traitors to God, and to his people." In noticing "how lords should live in their state," he remarks that "first, they "should know the law of God, and study it, and maintain it: that they should despise injustice, "and maintain poor men in their right, to live "in rest, and peace, and charity: and that they "should suffer no man under colour of their autho-"rity to do extortion, to strike men, or to hold "the poor from their right."[11] Instead of abandoning themselves to sensual indulgence, they should be careful in their prosperity to emulate the patriarch, who could say, "when the ear "heard me, then it blessed me; and when the "eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I "delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, "and him that had none to help him. The "blessing of him that was ready to perish, came "upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to "sing for joy. I was a father to the poor, "and searched out the cause that I knew not, "and brake the jaws of the wicked and drew the "spoil from his teeth."[12] In this manner "to "withstand wrong and evil doers, and to help the "poor, and fatherless, and motherless, and the "widow, and the alien in their lordship," would be "to govern themselves in their state as God "ordained it, in great wisdom, and in might of "men, and sufficiency of riches."[13] And as civil government was plainly instituted for these purposes, the magistrate who shall contravene, or

CHAP. XIII.

[11] MS. Of servants and lords.

[12] Job. chap. xxix.

[13] MS. Of good preaching priests.

CHAP. VIII.

neglect them, is admonished that for this cause the providence of God will very probably transfer his power, and at no distant period, to hands of more fidelity. The point, indeed, at which the wrongs of tyranny may be innocently encountered by force, the reformer has not attempted to define. But it was to imbibe, in some degree, the generous sentiments of much later times, to treat the duties of civil rulers as things which should be canvassed with the same freedom as those of the governed; and to regard the conduct of the one and of the other, as calling for the same modes of reproof and correction. If this was to scatter the seeds of anarchy, may its ascendancy in all nations soon be perfected, and its reign be long!

The obligations of the magistrate in relation to the church.

But to the nations of Europe in the fourteenth century, the doctrine of Wycliffe on the power of the civil authorities in relation to the church, was a much greater novelty than any matter of his creed, as relating to secular government. We have seen that he regarded the clergy, as subject to the magistrate in every thing affecting the social interests of the laity; and that he considered the property of the church, as in no way at the disposal of the pontiff; but as held entirely of the crown, and as liable, at the will of the sovereign, to its share in the contributions required from the general resources of the state. This, however, was not the whole of the influence, conceded by the reformer to the civil government with respect to the national priesthood, and its vast possessions. To the state, Wycliffe appealed for protection from the persecutions instituted by the clergy;

and despairing of such a change, as to emanate from that order, the duty of reforming the ecclesiastical establishment, he made to devolve chiefly on the magistrate. The ecclesiastics of the period are described as frequently "cursing the king and "his justices and officers, because they maintain "the gospel, and the true preachers thereof, and "will not punish them according to the wrongful "commands of antichrist and his clerks." Thus then enquired he: "Where are fouler heretics than "these worldly clerks, thus cursing true men, and "stirring up the king and his liege men to persecute Jesus Christ in his members, and to exile "the gospel out of our land?" "Sometimes," he observes, "they succeed in persuading the king "and lords, to torment the body of a just man, "over which Satan has no power, and to cast him "into a deep prison, as though he were some "sturdy thief, and all to make other men afraid "to stand forth on God's part against their he-"resies."[14] Exposing the abuse of spiritual censures, he thus adverts to the oppressions of the times. "If a true man displease a worldly "prelate, by teaching and maintaining the law of "God, he shall be slandered as a man in error, "and forbidden to preach the gospel of Christ; "and the people shall be charged on pain of the "greater curse to avoid him, and not to hear "such a man. And this shall be done under "the colour of holiness. For they will say, that "such a man teacheth heresy, and they will "bring many false witnesses and notaries in his "absence, while in his presence they speak not a

CHAP. VIII.

[14] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 23.

CHAP. VIII.

"word. And for this they plead the false law, "that if three or four witnesses, though false, and "hired by money, say each a thing against a "true man, then he shall not himself be heard, "though he might prove the contrary by the wit-"nessing of two or three hundred."[15] It is then contended, that if such evidence be regarded as sufficient to justify the conduct of persecutors, it would be easy to establish the innocence of multitudes who have shed the blood of martyrs, and even to vindicate the conduct of the men who crucified the Saviour of the world. But while these proceedings could not fail to excite sorrow and displeasure, he speaks of his mind as sustained by a consciousness that as the voice of Elijah at length prevailed against that of eight hundred false priests of Baal, so should the testimony of one true man become triumphant over a host of Cesarean prelates. Still to the reformer it appeared as prudent, and just, that protection should be sought in all cases of clerical persecution, from the bearer of the civil sword. From the equity of the state, it was accordingly solicited, "that no priest, nor religious man in "our land, should be imprisoned without an open "trial, and true cause, fully shewn to our king, or "to his proper council—and that christian men "give more credence to Christ's gospel and his "life, than to any bulls of the sinful bishops of "this world."[16] It is in the following language

[15] MS. Of Prelates. This custom was founded on the maxims of the civil law. See vol. i. c. i. p. 231, 232, and Fortescue's De Laudibus, with Selden's notes.

[16] MS. Of good Preaching Priests. Yet he remarks, "I would cer-"tainly that lords should wisely imprison those who are cursed of God

that he contends for that liberty of prophesying, which has diffused so powerful an influence over the institutions of this country, and over the character of its people. "Worldly prelates com-
"mand that no man should preach the gospel,
"but according to their will and limitation, and
"forbid men to hear the gospel on pain of the
"great curse. But Satan, in his own person,
"durst never do so much despite to Christ and
"to his gospel, for he alleged holy writ in tempt-
"ing Christ, and thereby would have pursued his
"intent. And since it is the counsel and com-
"mandment of Christ to priests generally, that
"they preach the gospel, and as this they must
"not do without leave of prelates, who it may
"be, are fiends of hell; it follows that priests
"may not do the commands of Christ, without
"the leave of fiends. Ah! Lord Jesus, are these
"sinful fools, and in some cases fiends of hell,
"more witty and mighty than thou, that true men
"may not do thy will, without authority from
"them? Ah! Lord God Almighty, all wise, and
"all full of charity, how long wilt thou suffer

"for breaking his commandments, unless they would leave their false "and needless swearing, and the frauds which they use each to the other." MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 23. The twelfth chapter of his work, on prelates, censures the conduct of bishops who fine, curse, and imprison men on account of religion, while they pardon the most notorious offenders on condition of their "paying a rent to antichrist." Coersion, it is observed, belongs to "lords office, as Peter and Paul "teacheth," and it is contended that the punishments affecting the body or the goods should proceed from that authority alone. In the fifteenth chapter of the same work he complains that the process of examination to which the Redeemer "God and man," and Paul "from the third heavens," submitted their doctrine, is abandoned by their professed disciples, who deem it sufficient to plead the infallibility of their church, and who persecute such as dissent from that dogma, and question the opinions it is cited to establish.

CHAP. VIII.

"these antichrists to despise thee, and thy holy "gospel, and to prevent the health of the souls of "christian men? Lord of endless righteousness, "this thou sufferest, because of sin generally "reigning among the people; but of thine endless "mercy and goodness, help thy poor wretched "priests and servants, that they possess the love "and reverence of thy gospel, and be not hin- "dered to do thy worship and will by the false "feignings of antichrist. Almighty Lord God, "most merciful, and in wisdom boundless, since "thou sufferedst Peter and all apostles to have "so great fear and cowardice at the time of thy "passion, that they flew all away for dread of "death, and for a poor woman's voice; and since "afterwards by the comfort of the Holy Ghost, "thou madest them so strong that they were "afraid of no man, nor of pain, nor death; help "now, by gifts of the same Spirit, thy poor "servants, who all their life have been cowards, "and make them strong, and bold in thy cause, to "maintain the gospel against antichrist, and the "tyrants of this world."[17]

With such ardour, and blended frequently with these devout aspirations, did the reformer contend for the unfettered ministration of the gospel. Nor is there room to charge him with claiming a freedom in this particular, which it would have been uncongenial with his principles to have conceded to others. His invectives, indeed, are often violent; but when recommending the most severe chastisement of the men who had done most to

[17] MS. Of Prelates, c. vii. p. 77. Similar sentiments are expressed in several other chapters of this work, especially in xv. xvi. xxi, xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. See also Homilies, Bib. Reg. pp. 129. 137. 138.

destroy the purity of the christian faith, the clause "sparing their persons," is of very frequent occurrence.[18] On this point, as on many others, his opinions belong not to the age in which he lived. To attempt the conversion of a spiritual offender, by the same measures which heathens employ to correct their thieves, is declared to be abhorrent from the character of his thoughts respecting the genius and the letter of the gospel. Hence, the extent of the reformation proposed by him was, "that none of the clergy be hindered from "keeping truly and freely the gospel of Christ "in devout living and true teaching, on account "of any feigned privilege or tradition,"[19] and also that the revenues of that order should be limited to the means of a decent maintenance, and to such persons among them as were free from the vices by which the sanctity of their profession had been so commonly degraded.

To extend this protection to devout men, and to effect this momentous revolution with respect to the property of the hierarchy, and the character of its ministers, the magistrate is declared to be fully competent. The enterprise, indeed, is described as one, which he may neglect under existing circumstances, but at the peril of his soul. "Think ye lords and mighty men, who "support priests, how fearful it is to maintain "worldly priests in their lusts, who neither know "good nor will learn it, nor will live as holy men "in this order. For ye may lightly amend them "by only telling them, that ye will not support

[18] Hom. Bib. Reg. p.p. 103. 114. Objections to Freres, ad regem et parliamentum, and elsewhere.

[19] MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

CHAP. VIII.

"them but as they do their duty, live well, and "preach the gospel. Then, indeed, they would "certainly do this. And think ye, great men, "were not this a thousand-fold better, than to "conquer all the world? Hereby there should "be no more cost to you, nor travail, but honor "to God, and endless good to yourselves, to "priests, and to all Christendom. God for his "endless mercy and charity, bring this holy end, "Amen."[20] In another tract he writes, "Kings "and lords should know, that they are ministers "and vicars of God, to avenge sin, and punish "misdoers, and to praise the good, as Peter and "Paul say. Also Paul saith, that not only men "who do sin are worthy of death, but they who "consent to it. Since lords then, may amend "the great sins of pride, covetousness, extortion, "and simony among clerks, they are condemned "with the sinners themselves unless they do it— "cursed of God for breaking of his laws, and "because they love not Jesus Christ. And be- "cause adversities and wars come on account of "sins reigning, and not amended, lords should "have neither respite, nor peace, until their sins "are done away. For no man thus withstand- "ing the law of God, shall have peace, so long "as lords have their lordships of God, to destroy "sin and maintain righteousness and holiness of "life. If then, they pay not to God this rent, "well should they know, that God must punish "them as he teacheth in his word. And if lords "do well this office, they come securely to the "bliss of Heaven."[21]

[20] MS. For the Order of Priesthood.

[21] MS. For three skills lords should constrain priests, &c.

CHAP. VIII.

On the custom of patronage.

It was not, however, the intention of the reformer, that the rights of patronage should be invaded by the state, any more than by the court of Rome; though from the thirtieth year of his age, he ceased not to complain of the worldly purposes to which that branch of influence was applied. In one of his later treatises he observes, that an idiot is often called to be "a vicar, or "parish priest, who cannot do, and who may not "learn to do, the office of a good curate. Yet "the poor parish provideth for him, and no "tongue in this world may tell what sin and "wrong cometh hereby." The rulers of the nation, and the patrons of livings are accordingly exhorted, if they would perform their duty as guardians of the best interests of the kingdom, to separate all churchmen from the anxieties of secular office, and from the snares of wealth. "By this means the poor commons would be "discharged of many heavy rents, and wicked "customs, brought in by covetous clerks, and of "many tallages and extortions, by which they "are now yearly pillaged. And thus by restoring "lordships to secular men, as is due by holy "writ; and by reducing the clergy to meekness "and wilful poverty, and ghostly travail, as lived "Christ and his apostles; sin should be destroyed "in each degree of holy church, and holiness of "life brought in, and secular laws strengthened, "and the poor commons aided, and good go-"vernment both spiritual and temporal come "again." To guard the mind of the laity, against the fear of those spiritual terrors, which would no doubt be employed to prevent these changes,

CHAP. VIII.

he observes, that the more informed among them knew, "that though all the clergy on earth "should curse them, yet, forasmuch as they "labour with a clean conscience, to bring the "clergy to that holy life which is exampled and "commanded by Christ; and to restore secular "lordships to secular men, as they should by "the law of God; that for this righteous doing, "God and all angels and saints will bless them. "And then the curse of man can harm nothing, "no, nor interdict, nor any censure which Satan "may feign. Almighty God, stir our clerks, our "lords, and our commons, to maintain the right-"ful ordinance of Jesus Christ, and to fear the "curse of God, and not the curse of antichrist; "and to desire speedily the honor of God, and "the bliss of Heaven, more than their own honor "and worldly joy. Amen!"[22]

On the custom of tithes and the effect of ecclesiastical endowments

It should be noticed also, as a circumstance which has exposed the name of the reformer to some reproach, that he ventured to speak even of tithes, as a mode of contribution for which no divine authority could now be pleaded. That sanction, it was acknowledged, had been, indeed, connected with this practice under the Mosaic economy; but it was assumed, that both the

[22] Ibid. The guilt of spiritual treason is said to be incurred by "lords "and ladies who hold curates in worldly offices from the souls of which "they have the care. For God giveth them lordship and presentation of "churches, to maintain his law, and to help true priests in the preaching "of the gospel. And if they withhold curates who are God's treasure "in the worldly service or in their chapels, or prevent their watching "over christian souls, which Christ bought with his own precious blood, "they are foul traitors to Jesus Christ, and to the people whom they "thus destroy." MS. Of Prelates, chap. iv.

ritual, and the polity of that dispensation had passed away, leaving "its moral" only, as binding on the church in these better times. So often too, had his spirit been grieved on witnessing the coersions employed through a parish or a province, to enrich a profligate clergy, that while inculcating most emphatically the duty of the instructed to provide for their spiritual teachers, he was ever ready to avow it as his doctrine, that where the priest failed notoriously in his office, the obligation to any species of contribution on the part of the people was dissolved. In such cases, the clergy might resort to spiritual censures, or enforce their demands by the aids of the civil power; but in so doing, they were said to follow the customs of the world, more than the example of Christ, or the maxims of the gospel. The third chapter of his treatise on "Clerks Possessioners," is commenced by describing the persons so named, as "traitors "to God, to lords, and to the common people." To the first, by deserting his law in favor of human devices; to the second, by placing them under an anathema except they forego their duty, and become the patrons of corruption; and to the third, by deceiving them in many ways, but especially by "teaching them openly that they "shall have God's blessing, and the bliss of "Heaven, if they pay truly their tithes and "offerings."[23] To destroy this artifice, which he knew to be but too successfully imposed on the people, the reformer thus writes: "True, men

[23] MS. C. C. Cambridge.

CHAP. VIII.

" say, that prelates are more bound to preach " truly the gospel, than their subjects are to pay " them dymes; for God chargeth that more, and " it is more profitable to both parties. Prelates, " therefore, are more accursed who cease from " this preaching, than are their subjects who " cease to pay tithes even while their prelates " do their office well."[24] Instead of extorting such tribute from the poor among the people, their influence should be employed in promoting their edification, and in disposing the opulent and the powerful to befriend them. Such it is stated, was the manner of St. Paul. And those who " find priests" are farther exhorted " to do " their alms for the love of God, and for the help " of their souls, and for the help of christian " men." They are also admonished, that in providing for men averse to these spiritual services, they must become partakers of their sin.[25] Nor need they fear the consequences of withholding their sanction from the character of such teachers, since the pontiff had himself commanded the people to separate from a priest who should refuse to put away a wedded wife; and it surely was not to be disputed, that there were sins quite as much at variance with the sanctity of the priestly calling, as may be said to be involved in the contract of marriage.[26] Hence it is required, "that the clergy of our land " be restrained from pride, and glorious array, " and worldly occupation. And particularly,

---

[24] MS. Of Prelates. [25] MS. How men should find priests.
[26] MS. How prayers of good men helpeth much, &c. &c.

"that our prelates and curates be charged by "the king and lords to teach their people well, "both by the example of a good life, and by a "free and true preaching of the gospel, and that "they do this as busily and readily as they seek "their tithes."[27] In such cases it is presumed, that no difficulty would be felt in securing that portion of tribute. The times were evil, but we must suppose that observation and experience had led the reformer to this conclusion.[28] Where the moral claim failed through notorious delinquency, on the part of the priest, an appeal to political violence "and strong curses against "men's good will" is described as serving but to irritate the laity, and to frustrate every design of the pastoral relation. Such measures, were viewed as effacing the important difference which had been placed between the authority of the magistrate and that pertaining to the christian shepherd. According to "reason and scripture" the former might thus enforce his decisions; "but "by the gospel, and the life of Christ, and of his "apostles, priests have no such power to con- "strain men to pay their dymes. Especially,

[27] MS. Of good preaching priests.

[28] His doctrine with respect to ecclesiastical endowments and tithes, is introduced in his sermons quite as frequently as in his other works. See 102, 125, 134. "And therefore say many prelates, that no man who "hath a cure, should live but on God's part, as on dymes and offerings; "and so by pure title of alms should they have the goods which they "have. For thus lived Christ the highest pope. And who art thou that "wilt not live thus? Wouldst thou be greater than Christ who is Lord "of all the world?" Such offerings, however, on the part of the people, are said is to be as binding as any other form of debt. It is at the same time demanded, "For what reason should he have dymes and offerings of the "people who liveth in lust and idleness and profiteth not to his people? "Certainly such law must be of the fiend." Ibid. 156.

CHAP. VIII.

"while they do not their spiritual office, but harm "men by false teaching and evil example. But "even though they did their office well, and men "would not pay them tithes, still they should "not curse men, but rather suffer meekly as did "Jesus Christ."[29]

The following passage presents a fair specimen of his frequent reasoning on this subject. "Men "wonder greatly why curates are so unfeeling "to the people in taking tithes, since Christ "and his apostles took none as men now take "them, neither paid them, nor spake of them "either in the gospel or in the epistles—the per- "fect law of freedom and of grace. But Christ "lived on the alms of Mary Magdalene, and of "other holy women, as the gospel telleth. And "apostles lived sometimes by the labour of their "hands, and sometimes accepted a poor livelihood "and clothing, given by the people in free will "and devotion, without asking or constraining. "And to this end Christ said to his disciples, "that they should eat and drink such things as "were set before them, and take neither gold "nor silver for their preaching, or their giving of "sacraments. And Paul giving a general rule for "priests, saith thus; 'we having food and clothing'

[29] MS. How religious men should keep certain articles. In a MS. of the Bodleian entitled Vita Sacerdotum, "the foul endowing of the "church" is described as having "always harmed clerks and lords "and commons." It is contended that the taught should minister freely to every real need of their instructors, but it is observed that "when the "apostles strove which should be greatest, Christ of his great wisdom "declared his doubt, and said there are two lordships temporal and "spiritual. The first falls to the kings and lords of this world, and in no "way to priests who are on Christ's side." This is also the substance of the seventeenth chapter in the fourth book of his Trialogus.

" with these things, be we content in Christ Jesus.'
" Paul also proved that priests who preach the
" gospel truly, should live by the gospel, and
" of tithes; he said no more. True, it is, that
" tithes were due to priests and deacons in the
" old law; and so bodily circumcision was then
" needful to all men, but it is not so now, under
" the law of grace. Christ, however, was circum-
" cised, and yet we read not where he took tithes
" as we do; nor do we read in all the gospels,
" that he paid them to the high-priest, or bade
" any other man do so. Lord, why should
" our worldly clergy claim tithes and offerings
" and customs from christian people more than
" did Christ and his apostles, and even more than
" men were burdened with under the law? Then,
" all priests, and deacons, and officers of the
" temple were maintained by tithes and offerings
" alone, having no other lordship. But now some
" worldly priest, who is more unable than others,
" by virtue of a bull of antichrist, shall have all
" the tithes and offerings to himself."[30]

The readiness with which churchmen appealed to the Old Testament, with a view to prove the divine origin of tithes, was frequently thus adverted to by our reformer. If the authority of the levitical law might be justly pleaded, as vesting them with their claim to a tenth of whatever the soil produced; consistency required, that the estates, and the worldly offices of the clergy, should be wholly relinquished, since no such matter could be associated with the priestly character as

[30] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii.

CHAP. VIII.

sustained by the descendants of Levi. In the same spirit, it is remarked, that "they take not "tithes and offerings by the form of the Old "Testament; that is, parting them in common to "all the priests and ministers of the church. "Nor according to the form of the gospel; that is, "stating a simple livelihood given without com- "pulsion by the free devotion of the people; but "they take them according to a new law of "sinful men, one priest challenging to himself all "the tithes of a great country."[31] The diversity of customs also, which prevailed in connexion with this mode of providing for the ministers of religion, was supposed to imply the want of some definite or authoritative law. It is accordingly observed, that "if they were due by God's com- "mandment, then every where in Christendom, "there should be one mode of tithing."[32] Thus the estates of the clergy, the reformer would have restored to the hands of the laity and the contributions by their flocks, he would have li-

[31] MS. How the office of curates is ordained of God.

[32] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii. The reader will perceive from the following extract, that the change which the reformer contemplated in the ecclesiastical state, though affirmed to be necessary, was one which he would have to result from the gravest attention to the many questions which it involved. "Would God," he exclaims, "that all wise "and true men would enquire whether it were not better for to find "priests by the free alms of the people, and in a reasonable livelihood, "that they may teach the gospel in word and deed, as did Christ and "his apostles, than thus to pay tithes as men are now constrained by "a new ordinance of priests, to a worldly priesthood, ignorant and neg- "ligent." He presently adds, that "of this first ordinance of Christ and "his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christ's people be "free to withhold their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and "no more maintain them in sin." To be thus free, and yet to provide "a "reasonable livelihood for good priests, were much better and easier, "both for priests and commoners, for this world and the next." Ibid.

mited to voluntary offerings, restricting them in the use even of such offerings, that whatever should remain after their real wants had been provided for, might minister to the relief of the necessitous.

The principle of the reformer's theory derived in part from the existing system.

And novel as these opinions respecting the secular claim of the christian pastor may appear on the first view of them, it was not in the strictest consistency, that they were denounced either as erroneous or heretical by the partisans of Rome. For what were the maxims which had conferred so much honor on the monastic and mendicant fraternities? Were they not those which regarded seclusion from worldly occupation, and separation from luxurious opulence as a species of discipline eminently favorable to the increase of devotion? The law of celibacy, had contributed much to augment the influence of the more ancient clergy, by exhibiting them as an order of men more self-denying, and more devoted than the laity; and it is well known that the religious had long rendered themselves the object of a much deeper veneration, by connecting with that article of restraint, their vows of peculiar poverty, and a separation from the vain and distracting employments which relate to this world. The principle involved in all this, did not escape the reformer's observation; and in his case it was not enough to applaud the sanctity of such rules merely as exemplified in others, but he ventured to call on the members of that order with which he stood immediately connected, even on the most dignified among them, to demonstrate their sincerity by ingenuously

CHAP. VIII.

conforming themselves to the requirements of a scheme which they professed so greatly to admire. By associating something of the severity of the cloister with their own vocation, the uses of the religious in the ecclesiastical state would be superseded, and all the reputation which had been obtained in that quarter, might be thus thrown into the scale of the parochial priesthood. Such is the bold theory to which the reformer challenged the attention of all churchmen, and of the rulers of Christendom. Its language was simply this. It is affirmed, that to reduce the clergy to that state with respect to property, which in the age of the apostles was never felt as a disgrace; and that to exclude them from all secular offices, though sanctioned by the same example; would be to annihilate their influence over mankind, and so to bring upon the world the last of evils. But let it be remembered by the persons who advance this sentiment, that they have long agreed to render their most profound homage to the men, who are distinguished by their professed adherence to these primitive models of devotedness. Nothing is now required, save that the maxims which these same persons have so variously declared to have most of Heaven in them, and which they know to be favorable to the greatest influence on earth, be allowed to form their character, and to regulate their conduct. Let them connect a poverty less equivocal than that of the mendicants, and a spirituality less suspicious than that of the monk with the discharge of their proper office, and the only result to be anticipated, is the exclusion of those intruders from the established

system, and the return of their own order to that kind of ascendancy, which was the beauty of the primitive church, and fraught with every blessing to the shepherds and their flock. CHAP. VIII.

The wisdom or the folly of this doctrine, and of the reasoning employed to sustain it, is left to the decision of the reader; but integrity requires, that both should be here distinctly stated. It is certain that the changes thus urged, were by no means the consequence of a defective reverence for the clerical office. In the language of Wycliffe "Good priests, who live well, in purity of thought, "and speech, and deed, and in good example to the "people, who teach the law of God up to their know-"ledge, and labour fast, night and day, to learn it "better, and teach it openly and constantly, these "are very prophets of God, and holy angels of God, "and the spiritual lights of the world! Thus saith "God by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in his "gospel, and saints declare it well, by authority "and reason. Think then ye priests, on this "noble office, and honor it, and do it cheer-"fully, according to your knowledge, and your "power!"[33] His reverence of the priestly office.

In the place, however, of such men, he saw a multitude who, while professing to be the ministers of the Saviour's spiritual kingdom, possessed half the property of the realm; and who, in proportion to their wealth, were found to operate as the chief barrier in the way of every attempt to restore the religion of holy writ to its proper ascendancy. These persons are de- His judgment respecting the clergy of his time.

[33] MS. For the order of priesthood.

CHAP. VIII.

scribed as "more busy about wordly goods, than "about virtues and the good keeping of the souls "of men. For he who can best get the riches of "the world together, and hold a great household "and worldly array, is deemed a worthy man of "holy church, though of the gospel he shall not "know the least point. Such a man shall be "full in favor and office with the bishop. But "that curate who giveth himself to study holy "writ, and to teach his parishioners to save "their souls, and who liveth in meekness and "penance, and busy travailing in spiritual things, "seeking nought of worldly worship or riches; "is holden a fool, and a disturber of holy church; "and is despised and persecuted of high-priests "and prelates, and their officers, and hated by "other curates in the country. It is this too, "that maketh many curates to be negligent in "their ghostly charge, and to give themselves to "the occupation and the business of the world. "But such curates think full little how dearly "Christ bought man's soul with his own pre-"cious blood and death, and how hard a reckon-"ing he shall make for these souls at doomsday. "Certainly it seemeth that they are out of the "faith of christian men. For they make not "themselves ready to come, and well to answer "how they came into their benefices, and how "they have lived and taught, and how they have "spent the goods of poor men. Had they a "christian man's faith ready in their mind, they "would begin a better life, and therein con-"tinue."[31] Thus while the guilt of the laity, in

[31] MS. How the office of curates is ordained of God.

favoring the corruptions of the hierarchy, or in allowing them to exist, is described as exposing them to the displeasure of Heaven, they are viewed as spotless when compared with the clergy. That body of men, in submitting to become thus estranged from the spiritualities of their office, and in contributing by their example, to diffuse impiety and all the elements of political disorder through the nation, are loudly admonished, that the alternative immediately before them, is reform or ruin. The remedy which the rector of Lutterworth proposed, we have seen; and such facts as are above adverted to, will serve to explain the severity of certain of its features.

Those who despise the will of the dead, are said to be "cursed solemnly of God and man." But Jesus Christ, in his testament, bequeathed to his disciples and their successors, peace in "themselves, and in this world tribulation and "persecution for his word. But worldly clerks, "have foully broken this good testament of "Jesus Christ. For they seek the peace and "the prosperity of this world; peace with the "fiend and with the flesh, and will endure no "labour in keeping or teaching the truth of God; "but rather persecute good men who would "teach it, and so make war upon Christ in his "people to obtain the worldly things which "Christ forbid to their order. In the life of "Christ, in his gospel which is his testament, in "the life also, and teaching of his apostles, our "clerks may find nothing but poverty, meekness, "ghostly toil, and contempt from worldly men "on account of reproving their sin, their reward

CHAP. VIII.

"being in heaven through their pure life, and "true teaching, and cheerful suffering of death. "Hence Jesus Christ was so poor in this life, "that by worldly title, he had no house to rest "his head, as he himself saith in the gospel. "And St. Peter was so poor that he had neither "silver nor gold to give a poor crippled man, as "is witnessed in the book of the apostles' deeds. "St. Paul, also, was so poor in this world's "goods, that he laboured with his hands for a "livelihood, and that of his fellows, and suffered "much persecution, and watchfulness, and great "thought for all the churches, as he himself "saith in many places of holy writ. And St. "Bernard writeth to the pope, that in his worldly "array, and plenty of gold and silver, and lands, "he is a successor of Constantine the emperor, "and not of Jesus Christ and his disciples. "Jesus also saith, on confirming this testament "after rising from the dead, 'as my Father hath "sent me, so I send you,' that is, to labour and "persecution, and poverty, and hunger, and "martyrdom!"[35]

It is sufficiently evident, that the prominence thus given by our reformer to the self-denial imposed on the pastors of the primitive church, arose from the disgust excited by the very opposite practices of the contemporary clergy. The following extract, will somewhat farther explain the process of reflection, by which Wycliffe passed to his stern conclusions on the important questions under review. "True teaching is the debt most due

[35] MS. Sentence of the curse expounded, c. xiv.

"to holy church, and is most charged of God, "and most profitable to christian souls. As "much, therefore, as God's word, and the bliss "of Heaven in the souls of men, are better than "earthly goods; so much are these worldly pre-"lates, who withdraw the great debt of holy "teaching, worse than thieves; more accursedly "sacrilegeous than ordinary plunderers, who "break into churches, and steal thence chalices, "and vestments, or never so much gold."[36] The christianity supported by such men, is often spurned as a libel on the exalted Being whose name is given to it. For if it be "a great sin to "witness falsely against a common man, it is "more to do thus against a holy man, and most "of all so to do with the name of Christ, the "Head of all saints, and the Lord of all lords! "Also, if it be a great sin to lie, and to defraud "men of temporal goods, it is more to deprive "them of spiritual good, as of virtues and a moral "life; but most of all to deprive them of faith, "and of the mirror of Christ's life, which is the "ground of all well-being hereafter."[37] The existing clergy, therefore, as having grossly betrayed the most important of all trusts, are denounced as the most guilty portion of the community. On the ground of this fact, which is presumed to be demonstrated; and on the autho rity of scripture, and of the most illustrious precedents; the magistrate is called upon to separate the sacred order from those incentives to covet-

[36] Ibid. c. ii. [37] Ibid. c. ix.

CHAP. VIII.

ousness and ambition, which had mainly contributed to these appaling results.[38]

It must be remembered that the doctrine of our reformer, which severed all endowments from the ecclesiastical establishments, is not only opposed to the practice of the church of Rome, and of the church of England, but to that of almost every sect in protestant Christendom. It is true, in describing the custom of tithing as being in these later ages but the institution of man, he would merely utter the sentiment of multitudes, who have yet considered that branch of ecclesiastical polity, as in every view just, and as eminently useful. But in asserting that whatever the assessment of the civil power might be, the voluntary offerings of the people should form the only revenue of the christian priesthood, he was understood, and will perhaps be still understood, as exposing christianity itself to the last degree of peril. It is certain, however, that no purpose was farther from his mind. Had there existed a man in that age, capable of reasoning on such matters, with the calmness and intelligence of Dr. Paley, it is not difficult to conceive what the reply of our reformer would have been. It might have been urged upon him, that christianity is a religion which in its evidences, and in much of its

[38] In his work On Prelates he remarks "that many of their sins are so "open that it needeth no more should be declared of them. But of "lechery men say that prelates are full thereof, and of the most cursed "species of it. Such, indeed, as it is a shame to know, much more to "do. And so curates take example of them, and the people take "example of their curates, both wedded men and single." MS. c. ix.

doctrine, has to do with languages no longer spoken, and with laws and customs which have long since passed into oblivion. That accordingly it should be the province, and the sole province, of an order of men, to preserve its documents, to vindicate its claims, and to enforce its truths. To this it might have been added, that a legal provision for the support of such persons is strictly necessary to their existence as an order, since apart from this, the leisure requisite to their vocation could not be secured, nor those circumstances of independence which are so necessary to a faithful discharge of clerical duty.[39]

Summary of his doctrine respecting the civil establishment of christianity and clerical revenue.

In reply to such statements, it would have been remarked by Wycliffe, that the necessity of the order of men adverted to, and the necessity of such men for the purposes named, it had never occurred to him to doubt. So far from this, his complaint had long been, that the clergy were not more adequately prepared for their peculiar duties, and more completely separated from all such employments as might prevent their most efficient attention to them. To the producing of such men, schools, like that in which the youth and vigour of his days had passed, would be deemed fully competent, supposing them to possess their property liberties, and to be suitably encouraged by the civil power. It would have been at once conceded, that many persons, aspiring to the office of churchmen, would relinquish their object, if assured that their support as such, must arise solely from the free-will offerings of the

[39] Moral Philosophy, ii. 305—313.

CHAP. VIII.

people. But this loss the reformer would describe as more apparent than real. He would not hesitate indeed to affirm, that should the clergy be reduced by such means to one-third of their number, and should that third bring with them the true spirit of their office, the change must be fraught with benefits too great to be ascertained. So long as the parish priest adhered to the law of celibacy, it was but little he could really need, and that little he supposed, might in general be obtained by every devout man, without the remotest sacrifice of independence. On these principles he had acted as rector of Lutterworth; they were also the law of his poor priests; and it was accordingly from experiment, that he was prepared to assert, that neither priest nor prelate need distrust them, if careful to cherish the temper, and to preserve the deportment, becoming their profession.

His language therefore in brief was, "let the parochial boundaries in the ecclesiastical state remain: let the present system of patronage continue undisturbed: but let the men introduced to the care of souls, in such places, remember how it was with their predecessors in the year before Constantine, with the Master whose name they bear, and with the apostles, whom they esteem it their honor to succeed. As thus appointed, let what they solicit from the magistrate be simply protection; and to meet the evils arising from the withholding of settled pastors from the established cures; and the many which must be inseparable from the appointment of improper men, let such priests as may prefer the labours of the evangelist to the

"more regular duties of the parochial shepherd, "be allowed to act upon that preference, regu- "lating their steps in all things, by the necessities "of the people, and the prospects of usefulness."

His object, therefore, evidently was to preserve the machinery of a religious establishment, but to preserve it subject to the action of causes which might serve to counteract its necessary tendencies to inertness and decay. Such is the general state of things in this country at the present hour; though the reformer's theory is in about the same degree at variance with the maxims of the present church of England, and with those of the many who have deserted her pale. The positions, however, regarded by either party as erroneous, if fairly examined, will be found in general to have arisen from a too favorable judgment of human nature; and it is hoped that the same amiable feeling will have its place in the mind of the reader, when forming his estimate of the character of Wycliffe, as connected with these much disputed questions.

On simony.

While the rector of Lutterworth is found thus assailing the more acknowledged sources of clerical opulence, it will be anticipated, that such modes of exaction as had provoked the censure of synods and councils, would call forth his severest rebuke. Simony, in the language of the age, consisted in the extorting of money as the price of discharging any spiritual function, as well as in the purchase of the livings of the church. Against these evils, which were in many cases to the last degree oppressive, the clergy frequently entered their protest in their solemn assemblies, but returned almost as frequently to their re-

CHAP. VIII.

spective cures, each to indulge in the vice which the whole had affected to renounce. "If any "poor man," the reformer writes, "shall utter "the truth of holy writ against the tyranny of "antichrist and his officers, nought else follows "but to curse him, to imprison him, to burn and "slay him, and that without hearing his defence. "It seemeth that John's prophecy in the Apoca-"lypse is now fulfilled, when no man shall be "hardy enough to buy or sell, without wearing "the mark of the beast. For now no man shall "do aught in the church without these false bulls "of antichrist, none looking for their reward to "the honoring of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy "Spirit, in the souls of men."[40] Men are therefore said to have become an article of merchandise, in common with the brute. But it is required, "that "the cursed heresy of simony in the clergy be "destroyed, both in benefices, orders, sacraments, "and pardons." It is also stated, that "whoever "doeth most simony, and maintaineth most sin, "should be judged, known, and treated as most "heretic, as most the adversary of Jesus Christ, "and as antichrist."[41] So gainful, however, had the matter of indulgencies become to certain bishops, that should their life extend to twenty years, it was ascertained that the receipts of each from the sale of such articles alone, must amount to sixty thousand marks. "And thus," he feelingly exclaims, "these wicked prelates sell the souls "of christian men to Satan for money, souls for

[40] MS. Sentence of the curse expounded, c. 16. x.

[41] MS. Of good preaching priests.

"which Christ shed his precious heart's blood "upon the cross!"[42] Hence, it is demanded, "that the ravening and extortion of prelates, and "of their officers, which they do under the colour "of jurisdiction and alms, and their maintaining "of sin, for the sake of an annual rent, be wisely "and truly stopped, and that they be well chastised "for thus robbing of the king's liege men."[43] But while the native clergy are thus guilty in this respect, "the simony of the court of Rome "does most harm, for it is most common, and "done most under the colour of holiness, and rob-"beth most our land both of men and treasure." In describing the encroachments of papal avarice, he remarks, "when a lord receives the gold for "presenting to a benefice, the gold dwelleth still "in the land, but when the pope hath the first-"fruits, the gold goeth out, and cometh never "again. And as for pardons, if they be aught "worth, they must be free, and to take money "for them is to sell the goods of grace, and "therefore simony." The guilty are then reminded of the leprosy which fell on Gehazi: and of the anathema pronounced by St. Peter on Simon Magus; while "kings and lords" are said to be "charged of God to destroy this sin, and "others; and if they do it not, they are con-"senters and fauters thereof."[44]

On the spiritual power of the pope.

But it will be remembered, that in instances where the temporal power of the pope was the matter of debate, and where many an exaction proceeding from the necessities or the avarice of

[42] MS. Of prelates. [43] MS. Of good preaching priests.
[44] MS. Of prelates.

CHAP. VIII.

the papal court had occasioned serious complaint, the successor of St. Peter was still revered as the spiritual head of Christendom. From him, as from a fountain, all clerical power must proceed; and to him either alone, or as connected with a general council, lay the last appeal on every question relating to the doctrine, or the discipline of the church. The vices of this spiritual sovereign, might be as peculiar as his station; but it was, nevertheless true, that on him as the master link, the whole hierarchy depended; and that from this source, impure as it was, all the purity of the system was to be derived. Wycliffe saw that a relation thus intimate, did indeed subsist between the head and the members of that vast body. But that this relation was of divine appointment, he explicitly denied, nor could he doubt the corruption of a fountain, whence so much evil had descended.

The prelates of the age are said to assert, "that "they ought not to be subject to secular lords, "so as to pay them taxes, and to aid the commons; "and also that they are not to be amended by "their people of their open sins, but by the "pope, who is their sovereign, and he by no man "on earth, because he is greater than all."[45] The reformer observes, in another treatise, and with visible indignation, "that when men speak against "prelates and the religious, appealing to the "poverty and meekness and other virtues of "Christ, they say that these are the counsels, "and not the commandments of Christ; and

[45] MS. Ibid. c. 17.

" that, therefore, the bishop of Rome, who of all " men, is most contrary to Christ in life and " teaching, may dispense with them."[46] On the impiety of this doctrine, Wycliffe thus writes. " All those who falsify the pope's bulls, or a " bishop's letter, are cursed grievously in all " churches four times in the year. Lord, why was " not the gospel of Christ admitted by our worldly " clerks into this sentence? Hence, it ap- " peareth, that they magnify the bull of a " pope, more than the gospel; and in proof of " this, they punish men who trespass against the " bulls of the pope, more than those who trespass " against the gospel of Christ. Accordingly, the " men of this world fear the pope's lead, and his " commandments, more than the gospel of Christ, " or the commands of God. It is thus that the " wretched beings of this world, are estranged " from faith, and hope, and charity; and become " corrupt in heresy and blasphemy, even worse " than heathens. Thus it is, that a clerk, a mere " collector of pence, who can neither read nor " understand a verse in his psalter, nor repeat the " commandments of God, bringeth forth a bull of " lead, testifying, in opposition to the doom of " God, and of manifest experience, that he is " able to govern many souls. And to act upon " this false bull, he will incur costs and labour, " and often fight, and get fees, and give much " gold out of our land to aliens and enemies; and " many are thereby slaughtered by the hand of

[46] MS. There be eight things by which simple christian men be estranged, &c. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VIII.

" our enemies, to their comfort and our confusion. " Also the proud priest of Rome getteth images " of Peter and Paul on his lead, and would have " christian men believe, that all which the bulls " thus sealed, speak, is done by their authority, " and that of Christ. And thus as far as he may, " he maketh that which is false, to be the work " of Peter, and Paul, and Christ, and in this " would make them false. And by means of this " blasphemy, he robbeth Christendom of faith, " and good life, and worldly goods."[47] Instead of bowing to this authority, the reformer states it to be " the certain understanding of some men, " that the cruel man-slayer of Rome, is not St. " Peter's successor; but the enemy of Christ, " the master of the emperor, and poison, under " the colour of holiness; and that he maketh most " unable curates."[48] In the following extract, the tenet adverted to, is numbered with those

[47] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 16. Rome he elsewhere describes, as converted into a mart for the property of the church, "where " he who can bring the most gold, shall soonest be appointed to great " benefices." The men so introduced are said to be examples of pride and other sins, and hinderances to other true priests who would teach the law of God. And he remarks with solemnity " that of all the ven- " geance which God taketh of sinful men this is most, to suffer such hy- " pocrites to rule the people, and by a withdrawment of his word to " draw them to hell." To announce such men " as able curates and " great men of holy church," is noticed as a fair sample of " antichrist's " blasphemy." In the face of all these corruptions, the clergy are said to maintain their allegiance to their chief, " so that when Paul asks how " men should preach, except they be sent, they understand this but of " such as are sent by the pope and other worldly prelates." To this, however, *it is* replied, " that sending of these worldly prelates is not " enough, without a sending of God, as St. Paul saith." The authority thus assumed, is not only such as would make good men depend on the sanction of "fiend's children" that they might preach the gospel, but such as would even prevent an angel from delivering his message to the world, should it please this haughty priest to controvert " God's bidding." Ibid. c. 1.

[48] Ibid. c. 3.

clerical inventions, which in later ages had so far destroyed the simplicity of the christian profession. "Prelates also make many new points "of belief, and say it is not enough to believe "in Jesus Christ, and to be baptized, as Christ "saith in the gospel by St. Mark, except a man "also believe that the bishop of Rome is the head of "holy church. But certainly, no apostle of Jesus "Christ, ever constrained any man to believe "this of himself. And yet they were certain of "their salvation in heaven. How then should "any sinful wretch, constrain men to believe "that he is head of holy church, while he "knows not whether he shall be saved or lost? "Certainly when the bishop of Rome is one who "shall be condemned for his sin, it is a devil of "hell, that they would compel men to regard as "the head of holy church!"[49]

On the hierarchy.

But it is well known that the supremacy of the pontiff may be totally renounced, while the forms

[49] MS. Of Prelates, c. 14. Adverting to the papal schism, he concedes the claim of Urban to be preferable to that of his rival, but speaks of any opinion on that subject as "beside belief," that is, as being no essential part of the christian faith. It is in the following manner that he frequently exposes the inconsistencies involved in the doctrine of the pope's supremacy. "It is openly said that there is nothing lawful among chris-"tian men without leave of the bishop of Rome, though he should be "antichrist, full of simony and heresy. And commonly, of all priests he "is most contrary to Christ, both in life and teaching; and he main-"taineth most sin by his priviliges, excommunications, and long pleas; "and he is most proud in opposition to Christ's meekness, and most "covetous of worldly goods and lordships." To place the church under the controul of such authority, is described as her subjection to the power of antichrist. Ibid. c. 22. Thus also, in one of the latest of his homilies he states that "true men say that so long as Christ is in heaven the church "hath in him the best pope; and that distance hindereth him not in "doing his deeds, as he promiseth that he is with his always to the end "of the world." Such men, it is farther said, "dare not put two heads "lest the church be monstrous." The "Head above" is therefore commended as alone worthy of confidence. Bib. Reg. 181.

CHAP. VIII.

of the hierarchy, of which he was so long the accredited head, are retained. And had Wycliffe seen the members of the christian aristocracy, distinguished by their piety and pastoral zeal, as they were by name and jurisdiction; it is probable that the source of their peculiar dignity, would have attracted but little of his attention. Previous to his appearance many vigorous efforts had been made to check the despotism of the papacy, but the claims of the national hierarchies had been in general regarded as legitimate and sacred. To our reformer, however, these gradations of office appeared to be unauthorized and injurious. I must presume that the reader is familiar with the substance of the controversy relating to this subject, and content myself with simply stating the judgment of Wycliffe concerning it, in his own language. Dividing the church into three parts, consisting of "preachers, defenders, and labourers," he describes the first as including the men "who should be next to "Christ, and next to heaven, and most full of "charity." Of this part he also states, that "they should all be of one religion, as priests "and deacons, living the life of clerks. But the "fiend has changed this part to many colours, "as seculars and religions. And these have "both many parts, as popes, and cardinals, and "bishops, and archdeacons: also monks, and "canons, hospitalers, and friars." The writer then proceeds to expose the sectarian animosities, and the spirit of domination, which these diversities of pretension and authority are said to have introduced; and the whole is viewed as the chas-

tisement incurred by deserting the laws of the gospel, which declare "it were better for clerks "to be all of one state." The origin of the distinctions, which had obtained among secular clergy, is thus given. "By the ordinance of "Christ, priests and bishops were all one. But "afterwards the emperor divided them, and "made bishops, lords, and priests their servants; "and this was the cause of envy, and quenched "much charity. For the ordinances of Christ "are founded in meekness, in unity, and charity, "and in contempt of riches, and high estate." This reasoning he concludes by observing, "so if "possessioners were brought to that state which "Christ ordained for his clerks, then should men "live in charity, both with seculars and also with "the religious."[50] In his Trialogus, the same doctrine is more than once inculcated. He there observes, "I boldly assert one thing, viz. that in "the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, "two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is, "a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm, "that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and "bishop, were names of the same office. This "appears from the third chapter of the first "Epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of "the Epistle to Titus. And the same is testified "by that profound theologian Jerome." He then remarks again, that the authority of popes and cardinals, of patriarchs, archbishops, and other dignitaries, was unknown in the primitive church; and thus concludes. "From the faith of the "scriptures, it seems to me to be sufficient, that

[50] MS. On the seven deadly sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VIII.

"there should be presbyters and deacons hold-
"ing that state and office which Christ has
"imposed on them, since it appears certain, that
"these degrees and orders, have their origin in
"the pride of Cæsar. If, indeed, they were
"necessary to the church, Christ and his apostles
"would not have been silent respecting them, as
"those impiously pretend who magnify the papal
"laws above those of Christ. Every catholic
"should judge of the office of the clergy, from
"what is taught in scripture, especially in the
"Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Nor ought he
"to admit the new inventions of Cæsar."[51]

On the religious orders.

But it will be perceived, that while all gradation of authority among the secular clergy is thus rejected, their claims as an order, on the religious veneration of the people, are considered as legitimate. This concession, however, is not made in favor of the monks, or of the mendicants. These are regarded, as under a vow of subjection to laws which are in themselves erroneous, and evil in their tendency; while the parochial clergy have only to return to the spirit of their vocation, to become, indeed, the fathers of their people, and the chief benefactors of their country. What the

---

[51] Trialogus, iv. c. 15. "Touching holy orders, he held that there "were but two, viz. of deacons and priests, so do we." Dr. James's Apology for John Wycliffe, p. 31. The doctor probably refers to the following passage in the "Institution of a Christian Man," a work which was intended to express the doctrine of the church of England under Henry VIII. "The trouthe is, that in the Newe Testamente there is no "mention made of any degrees or distinctions in orders, but only of "deacons or ministers, and of priests or bishops. Nor is there any word "spoken of any other ceremony used in the conferring of this sacrament, "but only of prayer and of the imposition of the bishop's hand." c. 42. Lewis, c. viii.

Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes had been in the age of the Saviour, that the friars, the monks, and the canons, are said to have become in the history of the church,—a multitude embracing so much of the element of discord, as to be agreed in nothing, except in their opposition to the genius of the gospel, and its Author. It is true, the contemporary prelates are frequently compared to Annas and Caiaphas; but they are still described as "less hypocrites" than the religious; inasmuch, as *they* not only descend to the same vices, but aggravate their guilt, by claiming the reputation of peculiar sanctity. That however, in the practice of these fraternities which chiefly offended our reformer, was the reflection it involved on the wisdom or the benevolence of the Redeemer. The preference of human inventions to the known example, or to the recorded instructions of the Son of God, he viewed as including the essence of blasphemy, since it imputed defect to the Godhead. It is thus he reasons to shew, that these pretenders to superior purity were in truth idolaters. "If they choose "to be ruled more according to the ordinance of "sinful men and ideots, than according to the "pure ordinance of Christ; and say, that the "ordinance of sinful man is better, and more "certain, and more perfect than is the pure or-"dinance of Christ; herein they treacherously "break all the commandments of God. They "worship false gods, and are heretics and blas-"phemers; they worship, and love, and fear "sinful men, and in some cases, even devils more "than God Almighty; and Austin saith, that a

CHAP. VIII.

"man maketh that to be his God, which he "feareth most, and loveth most."[52] While such were the reformer's opinions as to the origin and the character of the religious orders, it is not surprising that in his plans for sequestrating the endowments of the church, the wealth of the monasteries should be marked as being particularly susceptible of a much wiser application.

On the nature of the christian church.

Nor was the rector of Lutterworth at all aware of hazarding any real interest of the church, by his proposed exclusion of all official precedence from among her priesthood, or by his unqualified opposition to the monastic orders. Since the period, in which assemblies of fallible men were first allowed to determine the tenets which should be acknowledged as christian by whole provinces and nations, the name of the church had been imperceptibly transferred from the people to their spiritual guides. The judgment of the church ceased by this means to be that of the body of the faithful, and that modest deference to general opinion which was observable in the conduct of the earlier ministers of the gospel, was not enough to satisfy the more doubtful claims of many among their successors. Passing by the customs of centuries,—over which a melancholy glance was often cast, as on the gloomy space in which every thing evil had sprung up,—the reformer took his stand amid the christian brotherhood of the ages immediately following that of the apostles; and from that source of instruction,

[52] MS. Discourse on Luke, c. x. Attendite a fermento Pharisees, &c. C. C. Cambridge. See c. vii. p. 233.

as well as from holy writ, he learned to discard the notion of a church representative, that is, a church consisting of teachers to the exclusion of the taught. Hence, whether his attention be called to ecclesiastical authority, or to ecclesiastical wealth, it is contended that by such expressions, as far as they occur at all in the memorials of primitive christianity, the power and the property of the christian fellowship are as certainly meant as those of the clergy. Accordingly his scheme, in relation to the endowments of the church, was regarded as more nearly allied to general equity, than to the guilt of sacrilege; and when required to bow to the decision of the church, the propriety of such a demand is less the matter of dispute, than the claims of the christian priesthood to be considered as forming the church; and as being, in consequence, alone possessed of ecclesiastical authority. His doctrine on this point, is thus stated. "When men "speak of holy church, anon, they understand "prelates, and priests, with monks, and canons, "and friars, and all men who have tonsures, "though they live accursedly; and never so con- "trary to the law of God. But they call not the "seculars men of holy church, though they live "never so truly, according to God's law, and die "in perfect charity. Nevertheless, all who shall "be saved in the bliss of Heaven are members of "holy church, and no more." Many on the contrary who are called such are "the enemies "thereof, and the synagogue of Satan."[53] At

CHAP. VIII.

[53] MS. On eight things by which simple men are destroyed.

CHAP. VIII.

another time, he writes, "all those are cursed "solemnly, who spoil, or take away any right from "holy church, or defraud holy church of any "endowment;" and to this it is replied, "that "christian men taught in God's law, call holy "church the congregation of just men, for whom "Jesus Christ shed his blood; and not mere "stones, and timber, and earthly dross, which "the clerks of antichrist magnify more than the "righteousness of God, and the souls of men."[54]

On spiritual censures.

But while thus assailing what he believed to be the great incentives to avarice and ambition in the ecclesiastical state, his mind must have been conscious of some protection from those spiritual weapons which were still in the hands of churchmen, and which were so often found to subdue the courage of the most turbulent. The keys of heaven were claimed by the successors of St. Peter, as their special inheritance, and as one to be employed solely according to their pleasure. By each ecclesiastic, from the pontiff himself, to the humblest parish priest, the same mysterious controul over the future was assumed; but by every member of the hierarchy the power of absolution must be derived either immediately, or remotely from the man raised to the apostolic chair. From the sentence, indeed, of every subordinate authority, there remained an appeal to the next in gradation. But until revoked by a superior, the words of binding or loosing, by whomsoever pronounced, were regarded as certainly determining the future allotment of the

[54] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 2.

parties to whom they were applied. Previous also to the disclosures of the future, the sentence of excommunication cut off its victim from the remotest intercourses of social life; in this way anticipating the horrors, of a final separation from the communion of the blessed. Thus canonically invested, the village curate appeared among his plebeian worshippers armed with every instrument capable of effecting their subjection to his will; and while prelates lanced their anathemas with freedom against the aristocracy of the nations, monarchs were gravely taught that the sovereign of the church, could alone admit them to the celestial kingdom, and that should they die under the frown of the great representative of Deity, hell from beneath, must move to meet them at his bidding! By means of this power, the provinces of an offending monarch were frequently interdicted, and the performance of public worship were limited to the observance of such rites only as were deemed essential to salvation,—an event which threw an air of gloom and desolation over a country, of which from the altered customs of more recent times, a partial conception only can be formed. To distract the councils of such a prince, the thunders of the papal court were often so directed as to separate his principal advisers from himself, and from each other; and what this malignant policy failed to accomplish, was not unfrequently effected by absolving his subjects in general from their allegiance. By the disaffected in the kingdom subject to these visitations of papal wrath, this collision of power was often hailed as auspicious; and many a long

CHAP. VIII.

meditated treason, was at once matured into revolt. Thus the court of Rome might inflict all the miseries of invasion, without incurring the danger attendant on such aggressions; and might as readily diffuse every element of revolution through a nation, and be herself secure from the usual penalties of treason. The doctrine which in the language of Rome, is called the power of the keys, formed the basis of this most iniquitous of tyrannies. And so long as the maxims of spiritual power which the papal court had adopted were acknowledged, those by which she sought her secular ascendancy could be questioned, but with apparent inconsistency, and real danger. Reformation in the faith, and in the manners of the clergy was strictly necessary; but it was no less necessary to the accomplishment of that object, that the spell which had led mankind to suppose, that the priest possessed a power to consign the man, or the community, attempting the renovation of the church to perdition, should be broken. Wycliffe was fully apprized of this fact. Hence, while the mysteries of transubstantiation remain unquestioned, and even before he became known as the advocate of the vernacular scriptures, the reformer laboured, as we have seen, to expose the fallacy and impiety of these perilous fictions. His reasonings on this subject occur, more or less, prominently in nearly the whole of his writings; and this importance is evidently assigned to them, from their obvious tendency to recover the mind of his countrymen from that bondage which this doctrine had imposed; and to abolish the complicated evils, which had arisen from its abuse.

Had the suffering which was said to be inflicted on the offender by the sentence of excommunication been far less fearful, the levity with which that mode of chastisement was resorted to, would certainly have provoked the displeasure of our reformer from its marked opposition to the genius of our religion, characterized as it is by the most tender expressions of benevolence. But when the severity of the penalties, said to be awarded by the priestly anathema, was viewed in connexion with the almost ceaseless occurrence of that terrible denunciation; and when both were considered in relation to the motives commonly producing them, motives evidently derived from the love of some paltry interest; the indignation of Wycliffe was often so far excited as to vent itself in language of the sternest mould. At a moment of this description, the following passage appears to have been written. "Christ said, as the gos-
"pel of Luke witnesseth, that the Son of man
"came not to lose men's lives, but to save them.
"Why then do our wayward curates curse the
"souls of so many men to hell, and their bodies to
"prison, and doom them to loss of goods, and
"sometimes to death, for the sake of a little
"gain? And this too, while they are themselves
"accursed of God, for simony done at their
"entrance into office, and for their failure in
"preaching, and in giving the example of a holy
"life! Tithes, therefore, are not due to them,
"but only pain in hell. Often are they thus evil
"tormentors, slaying the soul which is bought
"by the precious blood of Christ, and which is
"better than all the riches of this world. Surely

CHAP. VIII.

"they are not spiritual fathers to christian souls, "who thus by their cursing would condemn their "children to hell for the sake of a little perishing "clay! This is to do worse than pagans, for they "tormented the body only, and not the soul for "evermore; but these children of Satan, devise "with all their power to plunge the soul into "everlasting pain. Yea, certainly on this point, "these wayward curates of Satan, would seem to "be worse than fiends, since they torment no "soul, except on account of infinite sin, while "these clerks of Satan doom souls to hell for a "little temporal debt, which they would pay as "soon as they are able, and which indeed is often "no debt, except as founded in old errors, and "frauds, and customs brought in against the "commandment of God."[65]

It is in the following language that he describes the impiety of the doctrine, which made the pardon of sin to depend on the benediction of a priest, and to be in truth the act of a mortal. "Worldly "prelates blaspheme against God, the Father of "Heaven, by taking to themselves a power which "is especially and only his, that is, a power of "absolving from sins, and of giving a full remis- "sion of them. For they take on them prin- "cipally the absolving from sin, and they make "the people to believe this of them; when in "truth they have only absolved as vicars or mes- "sengers, witnessing to the people, that on their "contrition, God absolveth them. Without the "sinner be contrite, that is fully have sorrow for

[65] Ibid. c. 17.

"his sins, neither angel, nor man, nor God "himself, absolveth him."[56] The practice of separating the excommunicated from all the charities of social life, is thus calmly examined. "By our "prelates, all those who commune with cursed "men, are cursed, particularly if they do it wittingly. But by this sentence it would seem "that God himself is to be accursed, since no excommunicated man will continue in this life "without God's communing with him, and giving "him breath, and sustenance, and this whether "he be censured rightfully or wrongfully. And "if God be ready to give him grace, and the "forgiveness of his sins if he worthily ask it, and "even before he ask it, this sentence would seem "too broad, since our good God may not be held "accursed."[57] The piety and benevolence of these enlightened sentiments, are left to make their own impression on the reader. Concluding one of his most extended treatises, and a work wholly devoted to this subject, he observes, "Men wonder "much why prelates and curates curse so freely, "inasmuch as St. Paul, and St. Peter commanded men to bless, and not to have a wish "to curse, while Jesus Christ blessed his enemies, "and heartily prayed for them, even while they "nailed him to the cross. And still more men "wonder why they curse so freely in their own "cause and for worldly gain, and not on account "of injury done to Christ, and his majesty. For "men should be patient under their own wrongs;

[56] Of prelates, c. 43.

[57] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 25.

CHAP. VIII.

"as were Christ and his apostles, but against "God's honor and majesty should they suffer "no words to be spoken, as is the case in false "and vain oaths, and impure ribaldry. But most "of all men wonder why worldly clerks curse "so freely for breaking their own statutes, pri- "vileges, and wayward customs, more than for "an open breaking of the commandments of God; "since no man is cursed of God, except for "breaking of these, whatever worldly wretches "may prate, and no man is blessed of God, or "shall come to Heaven, but he who keepeth the "commands of God. In the hour of death, it will "be in vain that the wicked man hath never so "many bulls of indulgence or pardon, or letters "of fraternity, or thousands of masses by priests, "monks, or friars. Let prelates and curates "therefore leave these points, for many of them "are as false as Satan; and let them teach the "will of God, and God's curse, and the pains "of hell as due to men unless they amend in this "life; and what bliss men shall have, if they "teach truly the gospel of Christ, in word, and "in holiness of life; and let them teach the mercy "of God in the greatness of his blessing to all "who continue to the end in true faith, and hope, "and charity to God and man. God grant us "this end. Amen."[58] From these passages, it is evident, that with Wycliffe, the propriety of spiritual censures considered as a branch of christian discipline, was not a questionable matter. The abuses of this authority, and the deceptions which

[58] Ibid. c. 25.

were connected with it, formed the matter of complaint. And revolting as these corruptions may now appear, it was to accomplish no small thing, to compel our ancestors of the fourteenth century to wonder at them, and especially to wonder at them for the reasons assigned. Through many ages, the nations of Europe had bowed to this fearful despotism, as to one, which if not divine in its origin, had become so consolidated as to make resistance hopeless. CHAP. VIII.

On the doctrine of purgatory.

But churchmen were indebted for much of their opulence and power, to a doctrine which extended their influence from the living to the dead. Indeed, had the state of the departed been considered as irrevocable, the one half of their ghostly empire would not have been obtained. And it is a circumstance of some peculiarity, that the english reformer, whose enquiries respecting the doctrine of the church were so fearlessly conducted, was not allowed to proceed so far as wholly to reject this lucrative device. The fact, however, may be explained: and it will appear also, that the doctrine of an intermediate state as adhered to by Wycliffe, was separated from nearly every thing which had rendered it so alluring to the clergy. The custom of praying for the dead, is certainly of much earlier origin, than many of the corruptions which the rector of Lutterworth was called to oppose; and of a still prior date, was the kindred practice, of offering thanksgiving for the aid vouchsafed to such believers as had closed their probation with peculiar honor. In the disputes of theologians, it has been sometimes deemed important to treat these services as of the same

CHAP. VIII.

import. There is, however, a marked difference between them. They were, indeed, alike the offspring of heathenism, and made their appearance in the church, as her purer discipline became impaired under the influence of those superstitious observances which were multiplied as her gentile converts increased. So late, however, as the eighth century, to pray for a departed spirit, was not necessarily to consider its state as one of suffering. But as the custom of thank-offerings, was succeeded by petitions; so the notion of mere quiescence or repose, was followed by that of a refining fire; and as the degree of torment endured, would naturally regulate the worth of the services which were regarded as tending to abate its severity, or to hasten its close; the temptation to assign to this artifice, a most prominent place in the machinery of papal superstition, became too powerful to be resisted.[59]

In one of his early pieces Wycliffe has cited St. Augustine as teaching that "souls in purgatory are helped and comforted, and brought "out thereof by the fasting of kinsmen, by the "alms of friends, and by the devout prayers "of good men and saints."[60] This statement is quoted with approbation, and this will not excite surprise if it be remembered that the writings of Augustine were revered by the reformer as next in authority to those of inspiration. In a subsequent treatise he confesses "that saying of masses with cleanness of holy "life, and burning devotion most pleaseth God

[59] See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. ii. p. 57.

[60] MS. Cott. Titus. D. xix. 129.

"Almighty, and profiteth to christian souls in "purgatory, and to men living on earth to with-"stand temptations to sin."[61] In the same page, however, his indignant censure is pointed against the base merchandise to which this doctrine had become subservient. "Ah, Lord," he exclaims, "how much is our king and our realm "helped by masses and prayers of simonists, and "heretics full of pride, and covetousness, and "envy; and who so much hate poor priests, be-"cause they teach the gospel and the life of "Christ."[62] In his work on prelates the clergy are accused of "inventing new pains, horrible "and shameful, to make men pay a great "ransom,"[63] and to counteract this "artifice of "Satan," he ventures to describe all masses "for "which money is taken," as the contrivance of hypocrisy and avarice. It was with a view completely to abolish these mercenary services, and to rescue the people from that false and dangerous confidence which had been thus produced, that the reformer so strenuously inculcated his favorite maxim respecting the inefficacy of intercessorary prayer, unless offered in the spirit of sincere devotion. With the same view prayer is defined, as "consisting principally in "holy life," and of this prayer the Redeemer is said to speak, "when he saith in the gospel, that "we must pray evermore." In support of this interpretation, St. Augustine and other saints are appealed to, and the exercise is again said to "stand in holy desire, and also in word;" but

[61] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded.
[62] Ibid. [63] MS. c. 3.

CHAP. VIII.

the latter is declared "to be nought worth, except it be uttered with devotion, and purity, "and accompanied by holiness of life." It is, therefore, enquired, "why the prayer of prelates "should be magnified so much, and sold so dear, "while they know not whether it shall be accepted or rejected?" "The prayer of the lay-"man who shall be saved," is affirmed to be "without measure better than that of a prelate "who should be condemned." It was pleaded, indeed, by such men, that if not heard "for their "own holiness," they were heard "in virtue of "holy church;" but this is treated as "a dream, "having no foundation in any place of holy writ, "inasmuch as God saith absolutely, that such "prayer is an abomination."[64] In one of his pieces, these masses are described as novelties, and are numbered in this respect with the pilgrimages and the feigned absolutions of the period. He complains also of the clergy as "making the "people believe, that if the priest say a certain "mass for a soul, it shall anon be out of purgatory; "and this, though God of his righteousness "ordain that soul to abide there forty years or "more, and though this priest be himself accursed "for his simony and pride. For as they falsely "pretend, the mass may not be impaired."[65] In these extracts there is no suspicion disclosed as to the reality of the pains of purgatory. But the efficacy of prayer for the dead, is viewed as connected with the devotions of the laity, no less than with those of the clergy, and as attended in the case of both

[64] Ibid. c. 11. [65] Ibid. c. 38.

by so much uncertainty, as to demonstrate the weakness of the confidence so generally reposed in that species of aid. The doctrine was thus divested of its chief importance as the source of clerical emolument.

Nor was it enough to question the success of intercession in favor of the departed while performed by the more vicious of the clergy, but a considerable scepticism is after a while expressed with respect to its influence when proceeding from characters less objectionable, or even from the pontiff himself. In the work intitled, "Of the Church and her Governance," evidently one of his latest productions, the words of the Saviour, "let the dead bury their dead" are cited as discountenancing such practices though perpetuated by the most devoted men, and with the best intentions.[66] And when he states that "the pope and his, are out of all charity, if there "dwell any soul in purgatory, since he may" according to the popular creed, "with full heart, "and without any cost deliver them," it is obvious that his faith in an intermediate state, regarded it as an abode over which no great influence could be exerted by the men of this world. For many years previous to his death, his allusions to this tenet are few and cautious, tending almost invariably to separate it from its corruptions, rather than to define its import or its uses. In the volumes which demonstrate his parochial industry, it is scarcely one sermon of fifty, that is found to contain any reference to it, and the

[66] MS. Bib. Reg. 18 b. ix.

CHAP. VIII.

notices which occur are so transient and obscure as to bespeak the general indecision of his mind on this point. From his increasing perception of the errors connected with this doctrine, which is so observable in his writings, it may be doubted whether he considered the intermediate state, as at all a state of suffering, at the period of his death.[67]

On the abuse of sanctuaries.

By the doctrine of purgatory, the decisions of the invisible tribunal, though regarded as proceeding from the will of the Deity, were supposed to be modified, and frequently revoked, in compliance with the intercessions of the priesthood. The same motives also, which had secured a credence to this supposed interference with the allotments of the spiritual regions, produced a submission, to many clerical intrusions in the administration of criminal justice in the present world. The cities of refuge were sanctioned by the hebrew polity; and it is well known that similar immunities were granted to particular localities in gentile nations. In both, the existence of such retreats may have been sometimes subservient to equity, by arresting the arm of violence, and of lawless revenge. But the evils which were inseparable from this custom in heathen states, were too soon connected with it as adopted in the christian church. In the age of William the

[67] In the MS. last cited, he speaks of the church as consisting of three parts, "the saints in purgatory" forming one. In his Trialogus, also, the church is thus described, "Triplex est Ecclesia militans dormiens et "triumphans," iv. c. 22. In one of his later homilies he describes John the Baptist as the most devout man "after Christ," and yet speaks of him as going "to purgatory" at death.

first, and so late as the reign of Stephen, the rights of sanctuary which protected the place of christian worship from those deeds of rapine and bloodshed which then filled the land, was often a political benefit. In the age, however, of Edward the third, the utility of such privileges was not so obvious. Wycliffe appears to have seen them but through the medium of their abuses, and these were evidently of the most flagrant description. "Westminster, Beverly, and other places," are described as "challenging this franchise and "privilege." In opposing this pretension, it is observed that the cities of refuge afforded but a temporary shelter to offenders, and to such offenders only as had slain a man unwittingly; whereas modern sanctuaries were both a retreat, and a home, to culprits of every class. And this, while they were often known to be the most vicious of men. Thus he states indignantly, "that wicked men, open thieves, known murderers, and such as have borrowed their neighbours' goods, and are able to make restitution, "dwell thus in sanctuary, and no man may impeach them by process of law." And the clergy, it is observed, "maintain stifly that "the king should confirm this privilege, though "serving but to perpetuate a nest of thieves in "his kingdom."[68]

On the invocation of saints.

Nor was the influence of churchmen with respect to the affairs of an intermediate state, and of the present world, supposed to terminate with their admission to the celestial state. Under every

[68] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 9. 20.

CHAP. VIII.

anxiety, whether arising from the immediate necessities of the worshipper, or from the supposed state of his departed kindred, the throne of those who had performed the work of intercession on earth, was believed to be accessible; and was regarded as forming, to the children of mortality, the most appropriate medium of approach to the majesty of heaven. An apostle, indeed, had emphatically declared, that "there is one Mediator between "God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" and it would seem sufficiently evident that to render this invocation of saints a rational service, these new objects of religious confidence, should become vested with the attributes of Deity,—at least with omnipresence, or omniscience. In the face, however, of these, and of other difficulties, the practice became general,—so much so, that the name of the Saviour was nearly excluded from the devotions of the people by those of the Virgin, and of the multitude, whose sanctity, or ambition had secured them a place in the Roman calendar. This custom of praying *to* the departed, like that of praying *for* them, was opposed by the rector of Lutterworth, with a firmness which increased as the errors connected with it were discovered. At an early period, he had been constrained to doubt the salvation of many who were raised by the canonizations of the papacy to the dignity of saints, and to confide in such for any spiritual aid, would of course be regarded as useless. After a while, it was suggested as important, to limit such invocations to those among the blessed, whose beatified state could be ascertained with certainty, from the language of holy writ; and at length the

entire practice is discountenanced, as uncommanded, and as at variance with a due regard to the mediation of Christ.[69]

On the worship of images.

There are few errors of the Romish church more objectionable in the esteem of protestants, than those which relate to the adoration of images. So striking a conformity, with the most obnoxious peculiarity of those superstitions, which christianity was so plainly intended to counteract and destroy, was not to become prevalent without a protracted opposition; and if it has survived the shock of the protestant reformation, it has been as the consequence of resisting appeals, which render the act of bowing down to any likeness of invisible realities, in a much greater degree criminal. It might have been expected, that customs obtaining their ascendancy amid the disorders and the barbarism attendant on the fall of the empire, would have been gradually discouraged, as the civilization of Christendom advanced. But to vindicate this gross departure from the spirit of the gospel, the most learned Ro-

[69] Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. 14. "The church of England," he observes, "has this very reasonable custom, that when a saint is invoked the "words are addressed immediately to Jesus Christ, and not principally "to the saints; nor is the solemnity of a saint-day to any purpose if it "does not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and to make souls in love with "him. It is therefore to be inferred, that when the observance of such "days deviates from this end, the motive must be avarice, or some other "sin, which disposes many men to think that all those saint-days ought to "be abolished, that they may celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, "that the memory of Jesus Christ being always recent, the devotion of "the people might be no longer parcelled out between him and his mem-"bers." Trialogus, iii. c. 31. The chapter contains many things on the excellence and sufficiency of the Redeemer's mediation, and on the sinister motives from which the practice of commending other intercessors had arisen.

CHAP. VIII.

manists have deigned to expend the stores of their erudition, and the most eminent in capacity, have employed the whole of their strength. The doctrine of infallibility, though it was not strictly necessary that it should operate at all with respect to such a matter, has no doubt been the chief cause of this pertinacity. It may be also, that to inform the understanding, and discipline the affections, has been found a more laborious enterprise, than to impress the senses, and to raise indefinite emotion to the place of principle.

That this custom should have attracted so little comparatively of our reformer's attention may excite some surprise. It should, however, be remembered, that by declaring the Most High to be the only object of religious worship; and the Son of God to be the only Mediator, he not only condemned the invocation of saints, but stripped their images and relics of whatever had rendered them the matters of a superstitious veneration. While such were his doctrines, no visible object of worship could be recognised, excepting such as were admitted to represent that Invisible Nature, of whose compassion to our race, the cross was the most affecting memorial. And that the use even of this was at length discarded, may be safely inferred from the fact that his immediate disciples provoked the displeasure of the clergy, by their undisguised contempt of every such aid to devotion.[70] Some years also before his death, he remarked that a near connexion existed, between gazing on an image, and the act of ido-

[70] Wals. 358.

latry. And to those who were accustomed to plead, that their worship was not rendered to the image, but to the Being represented by it, his reply was, that such reasoning had been borrowed from idolatrous heathens, and the men resorting to it, are described as the patrons of idolatry.[71]

With this effort to eradicate the propensities to creature-worship, the reformer connected an exposure of the doctrine which exhibited the more illustrious of the saints as having performed certain works of piety or mercy, beyond what were necessary to their own salvation; and which were supposed to be dispensed by the clergy, to the more necessitous in the matter of such virtues. This scheme of merit, which bespeaks an ignorance of the gospel revelation, scarcely a remove from heathenism, was embraced with confidence by the populace of every state in Europe; and that churchmen as the almoners of this spiritual bounty, might be able to distribute it efficiently, it was important that the wants of each applicant should be correctly ascertained. Hence the necessity of that momentous article in catholic discipline, confession to a priest.

Auricular confession.

The causes, which in the earlier ages of the church, had limited the office of arbitrator with respect to such secular disputes as arose among

[71] James's Apology, c. viii. sect. 6. MS. Exposit. Decal. p. 48. MS. Ecclesiæ Regimen, No. 10. He recommends "that the wasted treasure "hanging on stocks and stones, be wisely spent in defence of the king-"dom, and in relieving of the poor commons, that the people of our land "be not brought to theft and lechery under colour of such pilgrimages, "nor alms drawn from needy men who are bought with Christ's pre-"cious blood." MS. Of good preaching priests.

CHAP. VIII.

believers to the christian pastor;[72] would often favor a restriction of the duty of confession, to the class of men, who from their relation to the brotherhood, would be supposed most competent to decide on the religious state of the penitent. But the practice of confession as existing in the catholic church, became prevalent along with her doctrine respecting the efficacy of priestly absolution. Wycliffe, while admitting the propriety of the form of absolution, denied that an offender truly penitent, could fail to obtain the pardon of his sin on account of a withholding of that ceremony; and in like manner he acknowledged, that confession made to a priest might be seemly, and in some cases highly commendable; but it was at the same time affirmed, that where sanctity and wisdom were most conspicuous, whether in a priest, or a layman, there was most of the character necessary to receive confessions, and to administer the aids of religion. He accordingly remarks that "confession made to those who are "true priests, and who understand the will of "God, doth much good to sinful men so long "as contrition for past sins come therewith."[73] On another occasion he thus concludes a series of enlightened observations on this practice. "So "this confession which is made to man, has often-"times been varied with the varying of the "church. For first, men confessed themselves "to God, and to the common people, and this "manner of confession was used in the time of

[72] See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. 10.

[73] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 6.

"the apostles."[74] Much harm is said to have resulted from the abandonment of this primitive custom, for as no benediction of man can bring the impenitent to heaven; and as sin generally bears its own punishment along with it; the canonical regulations which relate to the confessional, are viewed as superfluous and deceptive. The matters, indeed, which the confessor takes beneath his cognizance, are stated to be such as must often elude his penetration, and accordingly leave him unequal to the task of adjusting the penalties incurred; and it is observed, that where this failure of capacity is found to exist, its place was too commonly supplied by caprice, and by motives still more objectionable. His parting advice, therefore is, "seeing that many "men often confess themselves to their confessors "in vain; confess thyself to God with constancy, "and contrition, and he may not fail, he will "absolve thee."[75] CHAP. VIII.

It was thus the reformer endeavoured to disenthral his contrymen, and to distinguish between the true claims of the christian pastor, and the assumed authority of the existing priesthood. To wrest from churchmen, that sovereignty over the conscience which the confessional had secured to them, was a step strictly necessary to restore among the laity of Christendom the feeling of responsible beings; and to confer upon them what no second tyranny has been known to invade—liberty of thought! So long as it was believed to be a duty to disclose in the ear of a confessor

[74] MS. Papa Schismæ, c. 3. [75] Ibid.

CHAP. VIII.

what had passed in the secret places of the mind; the most cautious guard would be kept against the intrusion of thoughts hostile to the dominion of the sacred order, or of the superstitions which they had sanctioned. Let confession be necessary to absolution, and let absolution be an essential link in the chain of salvation, and the empire which the papal priesthood laboured to establish and perpetuate is conceded. To the mind of Wycliffe, this connexion of things was manifest, and in the history of our country, it was reserved to his master genius to break this triple cord.

On the doctrine of indulgencies.

With confession to a priest, the doctrine of indulgencies is nearly allied. The sale of these commodities was the abuse which first roused the displeasure of Luther; and which led to that memorable revolution with which his name is so illustriously associated. It will be proper, therefore, to notice the feeling with which they were regarded by the rector of Lutterworth, nearly two centuries earlier. We have seen that, according to the doctrine of the church of Rome, the good works of the saints which were more than was required for their own justification, were deposited with the merits of the Saviour, so as to form one inexhaustible treasury. "The keys of this, "were committed to St. Peter, and to his suc- "cessors the popes who may open it at pleasure, "and by transferring a portion of this super- "abundant merit to any particular person for a "sum of money, may convey to him either the "pardon of his own sins, or a release for any one "in whose happiness he is interested from the

"pains of purgatory. Such indulgencies were "first invented in the eleventh century by Urban "the second, as a recompense for those who "went in person upon the meritorious enter- "prise of conquering the Holy Land. They were "afterwards granted to those who hired a soldier "for that purpose, and in process of time were "bestowed on such as gave money for accom- "plishing any pious work enjoined by the pope."[76] It is, no doubt, true, that the embryo of this custom, as of most others in the history of the papacy, may be traced to a period more remote than the pontificate of Urban the second. But that adjustment of the penalties of ecclesiastical discipline, which began at a comparatively early period to be entrusted to the clergy, was gradually extended from what was to be endured in this world, to the sufferings awaiting the offender in the next; and a power which was once exercised with the tenderest solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the delinquent, became known, ere long, but as the most effective instrument in storing the coffers of the priest. "Prelates," observes the english reformer, "foully deceive christian "men by their pretended indulgencies or pardons, "and rob them wickedly of their money." In proof of this statement he remarks, "that alms "after the will of sinful men" may procure "thousands of years of pardon, and also pardons "without number to man's understanding." There are also described as granted "by virtue "of Christ's passion and martyrdom, and by the

[76] Robertson's Charles V.

CHAP. VIII.

"holy merits of saints, which they did more than "was needful for their own bliss." Offended by this strange mixture of creature-merit, with that of the Saviour, and scarcely less with the pardon itself, which was presumed to be so conveyed, he affirms that the doctrine is one, "never taught "in all the gospel, and never used neither by "Paul, nor Peter, nor any other apostle of Christ; "and yet they might, and could, and were so full "of charity as certainly to have taught and used "this pardon if there had been any such. For "in Christ was all manner of good doctrine, and "good life, and charity, and these were most "abundant after him in his apostles. And since "Christ discovered and taught all that is needful "and profitable, and still taught not this pardon, "it follows that this pardon is neither needful nor "profitable."[77]

Adverting to the departed in an intermediate state, he remarks, "it passeth man's knowing "what is the doom of such souls. It seemeth "then great pride for sinful man to make himself "certain and master of the judgment of God, "which still he knoweth not.—Also if this pardon "be a spiritual and heavenly gift, it should be "given freely as Christ teaches in the gospel, "and not for money, nor worldly goods, nor "fleshly favour. But if a rich man will dearly "buy it, he shall have a pardon extending to "a thousand years, though he be really accursed "of God for his sinful life. While the poor "bedridden man who may not travel to Rome,

[77] MS. Of prelates.

"nor to such another place, he shall have no "pardon of the pope, though he be holy and full "of charity. Since then, this pardon, if there "be any such, should be freely given, it is theft "and robbery to take thus much gold for it. "Also this pretended pardon deceiveth many "men. For rich men trust to reach Heaven "thereby without pain, and therefore the less "fear to sin; and of contrition, and forsaking sin, "and doing alms, little is spoken."[78] He then observes, that if the nature of such pardons were "truly told, they should be set at nought." Again, he remarks, "great falseness it is so much "to magnify the power of the pope in purgatory, "such as no man here can show to be real, "either by holy writ or reason; since in this "world, we see an obscure man may thus despise "the pope and oppose his lordship, and he doth "in vain, all his might, all his wit, and all his "will, to be avenged upon such a poor harlot. "It seemeth, then, for many reasons, that this "feigned pardon is a subtle merchandise of anti-"christ's clerks, to magnify their pretended power, "and to get worldly goods, and to make men "free from the fear of sin, and sweetly to "wallow therein as swine."[79] If the contemporaries of Luther, admired the boldness of the man, who could venture, though very cautiously, to question this plenitude of the papal power; the reader will judge of his claim to the attribute

CHAP. VIII.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid. It will be observed, that this conclusion is founded on facts connected with the reformer's history.

CHAP. VIII.

of courage, who in much less favorable times, proceeded to far greater lengths in exposing the assumptions of the same despotic authority.

On the celibacy of the clergy.

The connexion between auricular confession, and the most efficient distribution of these indulgencies, has been noticed; and that which subsists between the business of the confessional, and the celibacy of the clergy is equally certain and dangerous. The law which required a disclosure of every particular which might possibly be connected with guilt, whether relating to the conduct, or to the secrets of mental history, was one to be enforced on the conscience of every female, by an unmarried priesthood. To evade it, would be to incur the guilt of insincerity, self-reproach, and in no few instances, the apprehensions of every future evil; while to act upon it, was to yield to maxims hostile to that safeguard of female innocence which no earthly authority should be permitted to invade. Nor is it easy to conceive, that confessors would always pass this ordeal untainted, without being either more or less than human. That the morals of a community must suffer from this species of intercourse is manifest; and whether the impurities of the clergy so frequently deplored of by Wycliffe, arose from this source, in a greater or a less degree, it is certain that their forced celibacy was the parent of vices which frequently roused his severest indignation. The guilty conduct of priests, with respect to "wives, widows, "and maidens," is said to lead to the frequent "murder of children." And the impure practices of the higher clergy, are said to be but too faithfully copied by their dependants and the laity.

To have seen these vices as certainly consequent on the celibacy of churchmen, would have been enough, in the mind of Wycliffe, to have created a suspicion as to the real obligation of the law which imposed it. Such with him was the general effect of existing disorders. Where the abuses of a practice were more obvious than its uses, the closest examination of its origin and pretensions commonly followed.

On this article he thus writes. "Since forni-
"cation is so perilous, and priests are so frail,
"God ordained in the old law, that priests should
"have wives; and in the new law, never forbid
"it, neither by Christ nor by his apostles; but
"rather approved it. But now through the hypo-
"crisy of fiends and of false men, many bind
"themselves to priesthood and chastity, and
"forsake those who by God's law are their wives,
"and injure maidens and wives, and fall into all vices
"most foully."[80] It required integrity and firmness to avow such opinions in such an age. And

[80] MS. Of wedded men and wives. While many are found assuming the office of "priests and religious," but to "live a lustful life," it is concluded that they must fall thus "into lechery in divers degrees, and into "the sins against nature." Bodily marriage is defined, as "a sacra-"ment and a figure of the ghostly wedlock between Christ and the holy "church, as St. Paul saith," and it is farther described as approved of God in paradise, by the Saviour when on earth, and by his apostles, one of whom is said to have numbered the prohibition of marriage among the marks of the apostacy which should appear before the last day. It is nevertheless stated, that "though matrimony be good and greatly com-"mended of God, clean virginity is much better, and the priests who "keep clean chastity in body and soul do best. But many take this "charge indiscreetly, and slander themselves greatly before God and "his saints. So high and so noble is virginity, that Christ commanded it "not generally, but said he who may, let him take it. So, also, St. Paul "gave no command of virginity, but gave council to those who were "equal thereto." Thus complete was the unity of sentiment between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the english reformer. MS. Ibid.

CHAP. VIII.

yet we must admire the prudence and devotion, which prevented the reformer's availing himself of the full liberty, which he thus felt as pertaining to his character. Had Wycliffe anticipated some of the most illustrious reformers of the sixteenth century, by becoming a married priest; the event, however innocent, would have been regretted by many as a weakness, necessarily injurious to the enterprise in which he was engaged. By a more numerous class, such an occurrence would have been hailed with delight, as tending to demonstrate, that his disaffection to the church had arisen much less from her corruptions, than from the holy severity of her discipline; and in the fourteenth century, this arch-weapon would have made a more disastrous impression than was produced by it in later periods.

On the sacraments.

We have seen that the rector of Lutterworth regarded marriage as a sacrament; but his orthodoxy on this, and some other formalities so designated, was rather apparent, than real. By a sacrament, he understood "a token that may be "seen, of a thing which may not be seen;"[81] and he admitted, with the church of Rome, that these were seven in number.[82] His doctrine relating to penance has been sufficiently explained. On the rite of baptism, Wycliffe thought with his contemporaries, both as to its mode, and its subjects. "It matters not," he observes, "whether the "persons baptized, are dipped three times, or

[81] Trial. iv. 1.

[82] Ibid. Dr. James suggests, that Wycliffe after a while admitted but two sacraments; but his Trialogus is among his latest productions. See Apology for John Wickliffe.

"have only water poured on their head."[83] But while the mode of baptism was regarded as thus indifferent, its administration in some form, was deemed so far important, that the reformer adverts with approbation to the practice of allowing even females to perform that solemnity, rather than suffer an expiring infant to pass from the world unblessed by its influence. On the future state of an unbaptized infant, he confesses himself unable to determine any thing, but considers it "as "probable that without this washing, Christ may "spiritually baptize infants, and in consequence "save them."[84] We may regret the force of that superstition which could thus far enslave even the mind of Wycliffe. But these facts place his doctrine relating to the subjects of baptism, beyond dispute. On the import of this rite, he remarks, that "baptism with water," is significant "of baptism with the Spirit." In the latter, God "christeneth the souls of men, that is to "say, washeth their souls from the uncleanness "of all sin." In one of his parochial discourses, he observes, "bodily baptizing is a figure shewing, "how man's soul should be baptized from sin. For "the wisdom of Christ would not suffer us to "keep this figure, except for some good reason. "Bodily washing of a child is not the end of "baptizing; but baptizing is a token of the "washing of the soul from sin both original and "actual, by virtue taken of Christ's death."[85]

CHAP. VIII.

[83] Ibid. iv. c. 12. [84] Ibid.
[85] Hom. Bib. Reg. 165, 166, on Rom. chap. vi.

CHAP. VIII.

Confirmation.

On confirmation, he remarks, that "the oil "with which the prelates anoint children at such "times; and the linen hood, or veil put over "their head; are a ceremony of little worth, and "one having no foundation in scripture."[86] He farther cautions such as may have placed an undue confidence in this service, that "the child "or man, receiveth not the gifts of the Holy "Spirit from the bishop, but as the gift of God." It is also stated, that "it does not appear, that "this sacrament should be reserved to a Cesarean "prelacy; that it would be more devout, and "more conformable to scripture language, to deny "that the bishops give the Holy Spirit, or confirm "the giving of it; and that it therefore seems to "some, that the brief and trivial confirmation "of the prelates, and the ceremonies added to "it for the sake of pomp, were introduced at the "suggestion of Satan, that the people may be "deceived as to the faith of the church, and that "the state and necessity of bishops may be the "more acknowledged."[87] At other times, he complains of the importance conferred on this service, as a disparagement of "the more worthy "and needful sacraments."[88]

Orders.

Clerical ordination, he has defined as "a power "conferred on a devout clerk by the ministry of a "bishop, that he may duly minister to the church,"[89] and the doctrine of the age is said to be "that "a clerk is not ordained, except as a bishop shall

[86] Trial. iv. 14. [87] Ibid.
[88] MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. vii. [89] Ibid.

"grant him the Holy Ghost, and thus imprint a character on his mind which is indelible, and accordingly if a clerk be degraded, or whatever else may happen to him, this character may not be lost." But this tenet is regarded as inexplicable; and as the character so derived was frequently of little worth, it is made the matter of prayer, that the clergy may receive some more efficient grace from a higher source.[90] The mission conferred by the authority of the prelates, is viewed as having no necessary connexion with that which the true priest receives from the unseen Bishop of souls. Hence while the established forms of ordination were acknowledged, the character said to be conveyed by them, formed the matter of serious debate. His doctrine with respect to auricular confession has been stated,[91] and his opinions on the supposed sacrament of extreme unction were deemed equally heterodox.[92] CHAP. VIII.

The eucharist.

Much too, has been said on Wycliffe's sentiments concerning the eucharist. The word transubstantiation, was designed to express the changing of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and this doctrine is rejected in his writings in almost every form of language. In his two confessions relating to this article, and in a multitude of instances, the continuance of the material elements after the words of consecration were pronounced, is distinctly asserted. Still it must be acknowledged,

[90] Trial. iv. 15. [91] See p. 331—334.

[92] Walden accused him of heresy on this point, ii. 268. James's Apology, c. viii. sect. 4.

CHAP. VIII.

that he sometimes speaks of a presence of the Saviour, in connexion with the visible emblems, in a manner which, while it certainly does not amount to the impanation of Luther, is a slight removel from the statements of this doctrine which distinguished the creed of Zinglius.[93] The language of hesitation and uncertainty is not often that of reformers, but this is one of those points on which the rector of Lutterworth was free to confess his ignorance. The matter also, on which he found it impossible himself to decide, he regarded as forming no essential part of the christian faith, and as that, in consequence, on which every man should be left to the guidance of his own perceptions. It is in one of his latest pieces that he thus writes. "The mass is "neither better for one priest nor another, for in "its kind it is bread nought amended by the "priests, and inasmuch as it is God's body, it "is like God whosoever may consecrate it. But "here we know many things which are no part "of necessary faith, and which we should neither

[93] In his Conclusions, published at Oxford, in the summer of 1381, it is not only transubstantiation but "indemptification and impanation" which are denounced as having no support from the scriptures. To expose the contradictions and the impossibilities attendant on the latter doctrines, is the purpose to which the eighth chapter in the last book of his Trialogus is devoted. By identification he professes to understand the uniting of two things previously distinct; as though by an act of Omnipotence Peter and Paul should cease to be two persons, and become one. But he states, that with respect to the eucharist, he had "adduced many "reasons to show that such an indemptification is impossible." He also adds, "I am certain that the doctrine of impanation is impossible and "heritical." As the humanity of Christ is not to be considered apart from his divinity, it is said to follow from the assertions of men respecting the identification of the body of Christ with the bread, "that a mere "wafer becomes the Deity of Christ," and it is indignantly asked "what "idolatry can be more completely detestable?"

"I grant nor deny, hope nor doubt, but rather "suppose them, or guess them." To illustrate his meaning, he presently observes, "Should "the pope ask me if I were ordained to be saved, "or predestinated, I would say, that I hoped "so; but I would not swear it, nor affirm it with- "out condition; and though he should greatly "punish me, yet would I neither deny it, nor "doubt it in any way. And so if prelates op- "pose me inquiring what the sacrament of the "altar is in its kind, I would say, *it is bread, the "same that it was before*, since the gospel thus "teaches if we will believe." But to all ques- tions beyond this, his only answer is said to be, "I neither grant it, nor deny it, nor doubt it."[94] CHAP. VIII.

On public worship.

It will be seen that the peculiarities of senti- ment now adverted to, refer principally to the opinions and ceremonies which, in the fourteenth century, were connected with the exercises of public worship. Nor is it reasonable to suppose, that the established ritual was in all other re- spects according to his views of propriety. The reformer's complaints, however, referred chiefly to the subordinate place assigned in that ritual to the office of preaching, to the abuse of images, and to the idle fopperies frequently obtruded on a religious assembly by singers and musicians. The manner of conducting the wor- ship of God, which tended to inform the wor- shipper, and to improve his devotional affections, is often declared to be that of his preference, because most consonant with the suggestions of

[94] MS. On the seven deadly sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii.

CHAP. VIII.

reason, and with the matured character distinguishing the present dispensation of religion.[95] Still, to the period of his death, he appears to have conformed to the customs of the age in such matters; attending to the various services connected with the festivals of the church, and rendering the gospels appointed to be read on such occasions the ground work of his address to the people.[96]

On the sufficiency of the scripture and the right of private judgment.

The reader has frequently seen, that with Wycliffe, something more than the decision of the church was necessary to determine the truth of doctrines less replete with difficulties than that of transubstantiation. That the pontiffs were not raised above the influence of error, was believed to be demonstrated by many a melancholy fact; and that ecclesiastical councils had shewn themselves to be scarcely more worthy of confidence, is nearly as frequently asserted. Indeed, the whole of his conduct as the opponent of the papal power, arose from his conviction of the sufficiency of the sacred scriptures, and of the

[95] MS. Of contemplative life. On prelates, c. vi. In the latter treatise the writer combats the arguments adduced in favour of church music, from the practice of the Old Testament church, and from the visions of the Apocalypse. It is laid down as an important maxim, that whatever is preferred in the worship of God "to the hearing of his law and of the "bliss of Heaven," is an evil which should be suppressed. Augustine is also cited, as teaching that guilt is contracted as often as the sound becomes more attractive than the sense.

[96] Among his sermons are nearly forty which were delivered on the saint-days observed in that age. One of the days so regarded was sacred to St. Thomas of Canterbury, another to the purification of the Chair of St. Peter, and another to the translation of St. Martin, (MS. C. C. Cambridge, Lewis, c. viii.) It should, however, be remarked, that the superstitions connected with such seasons, were fearlessly exposed in these discourses.

right of private judgment; and it will be remembered, that in numerous extracts from his writings which appear in the pages of this work, these opinions are not more clearly assumed than expressed. The corruptions of the church are rarely exposed, without being noticed, as demonstrating the folly and impiety of supposing her visible guides to be infallible. In the following passage, he discovers his sentiment respecting the elements of which ecclesiastical councils were generally composed. "Worldly prelates make of "themselves a congregation, and of clerks assenting to them,—some for worldly dread and "worldly favors, some for gold, and the hope of "benefices, and some for fear of the curse, or "of the losing of benefices, or for dread of "slander, imprisoning, and burning:"—but the conduct of such assemblies in vesting their own interpretations of holy writ, with the authority due to the record itself, is described as involving the guilt of blasphemy.[97] "The law of God, and "of reason," he observes, "we should follow "more than that of our popes and cardinals; so "much so, that if we had a hundred popes, and "if all the friars were cardinals; to the law of "the gospel we should bow, more than to all this "multitude."[98]

CHAP. VIII.

The last chapter in the third book of his Trialogus, is intended to demonstrate, that "the

[97] MS. How Satan and his priests, and his feigned religious, &c. &c.

[98] Cod. Ric. Jamsei. "The faith which served the church a thousand "years while Satan was bound, will not serve it now it is loosed, hence "these councils. And where the greater part of such men assent to "any sentence, then all holy church shall know that to be gospel, and by "this false principle the fiend beguileth men." Ibid.

CHAP. VIII.

"law of Christ infinitely exceeds all other laws." It is there observed, that in the sacred scriptures "all truth is either expressed or implied," and it is said accordingly to follow, that "other writings "can have worth or authority, but so far as their "sentiment is derived from the scriptures." This is stated as the doctrine of Augustine, and as including every thing necessary "to correct the "edicts of the papal court, and of the prelates, "and also the errors of the religious orders." It is stated, also, that "the smooth covering under "which all the subtleties of antichrist are con-"cealed," consists in imputing obscurity to the scriptures, with a view to introduce the rival authority of the priesthood. The chapter thus concludes. "I am certain, indeed, from the "scriptures that neither antichrist, nor all his "disciples, nay nor all fiends may really impugn "any part of that volume as it regards the excel-"lence of its doctrine. But in all these things, "it appears to me, that the believing man should "use this rule—if he soundly understands the "sacred scripture, let him bless God; if he be "deficient in such a perception, let him labour "for soundness of mind. Let him also dwell "as a grammarian upon the letter, but be fully "aware of imposing a sense upon scripture, which "he doubts the Holy Spirit does not demand. "For such a man, according to St. Jerome, is "a heretic; and much more he, who rashly "blasphemes, by imposing a meaning on scrip-"ture, which the Spirit itself declares to be im-"possible."

It should be observed, however, that the right

of private judgment as asserted by Wycliffe, was not a liberty to reject established opinions without examination. On the contrary, patient inquiry, fervent prayer, and a disposition to comply with the requirements of scripture whatever they may be, are constantly adverted to, as necessary preparatives to a proper acquaintance with that volume. These sacred obligations, are considered as devolving on every man discarding the authority of the church, and professing to make the scriptures, the source of his sentiments, and the guide of his conduct.[99] "Poor priests, and true men," says the rector of Lutterworth, "would willingly yield obedience to God, and to holy church, and also to each man on earth, inasmuch as he teacheth truly the commandments of God, and things which may profit the souls of men. And no more ought any man to obey, even to Christ himself, both God and man. If any worldly prelate asketh more obedience than

[99] To the exposition of scripture four qualifications are noticed as important. An ability to collate manuscripts—an acquaintance with logic—the practice of comparing scripture with scripture—and above all a consciousness of dependance on the promised assistance of the Spirit, the great Teacher. It is further said, that "this illumination, so necessary "to a full understanding of the word of God, is promoted by sanctity of "life. This should theologians be studious to preserve, being careful "that they invent nothing foreign to the faith of the scriptures." And though his own expositions of scripture were sometimes obscured by mysteries and allegory, it is his remark that "all things necessary in "scripture are contained in its proper literal and historical sense," and some men are said to be "enlightened from above that they may so ex-"plain it." Two rules are noticed as having aided him in distinguishing between the Apocryphal and the Canonical scriptures: 1st. to ascertain what books of the Old Testament are cited in the New. 2d. A comparison of the doctrines contained in any suspicious document with that inculcated in the scriptures of acknowledged authority. James's Apology, c. i.

CHAP. VIII.

this, he surely is antichrist, and Lucifer's master. For Jesus Christ is the God of righteousness, and truth, and of peace and charity. He may not lie, nor deny himself. How then may any sinful prelate justly compel men to do against righteousness, and the health of their souls, and a good conscience? For Christ saith in the gospel of St. John, that the Son may do nothing but what he hath seen the Father do, and Christ, therefore, commanded all men, that they should believe on him, but as he did the works of the Father. Why then, should christian men be compelled by the clerks of antichrist, to do after their commandments, while they do not the works of God, but those of the fiend? And thus Christ speaketh to the Jews, and asketh why they believe not on him, if he saith the truth? And hence, he also saith, who of you shall reprove me of sin? And he would that any man had done so, if he might in truth. Hence, also, at the time of his passion, he said to the bishop's servant who smote him on the face, "If I have done evil, bear thou witness of the evil." And thus, if prelates are vicars of Christ, they ought to follow him in their terms of obedience, and to ask no more of any man than he did." It is added, that Christ who was "both God and man, sought the souls of men, lost through sin, thirty years and more, in great labour and weariness, and many pains, travelling on his feet many thousand miles in the cold, and storm, and tempest!" And it is demanded, whether any "sinful idiot," because vested by

human power with ecclesiastical jurisdiction, may justly exact "more obedience than did Christ "and his apostles." In the same treatise it is remarked, that "Christ hath said in his gospel, "that if the blind lead the blind, they fall both "into the lake. Now these worldly prelates "are blind in God's law, both in their knowledge "of it, and in the life they live; and accordingly, "no man should be led by them, for fear lest they "both fall into hell from their ignorance of holy "writ."[100] Censuring the too prevalent custom, of putting "the bidding of God behind, and the "bidding of sinful man before," he remarks, "let prelates study busily and truly holy writ, "and live openly hereafter, and destroy the open "sin of other men; and poor priests, and chris-"tian men, without any summoning, would wil-"lingly come to them, at any cost or labour by "land or water, and would meekly do them "obedience and reverence, as they would to "Peter and Paul. Let the world judge then, "whether these dissensions belong to worldly "prelates, ignorant in themselves, and cursed in "life, or to poor priests and true men who desire "night and day to know the will of God, to "honor it, and before all things to do it."[101]

CHAP. VIII.

[100] MS. How men should find priests. "In reason, the nature of any "spiritual office consisting in instruction in truth, and guidance in virtue "toward attainment of salvation; if any man doth lead into pernicious "error or impiety, he thereby ceaseth to be capable of such office; as a "blind man by being so, doth cease to be a guide. No man can be "bound to follow any one into the ditch, or to obey any one to the pre-"judice of his own salvation. If any pastor should teach bad doctrine or "prescribe bad practice, the people may reject and disobey him." Barrow's Works, i. 744.

[101] MS. De Obidientia, Prelatorum. "Christian men say truly that

CHAP. VIII.

Summary of his theological doctrine.

Of Wycliffe's theological doctrine, the reader will have formed his judgment from the passages inserted in the preceding chapters; and especially from those supplied by the reformer's homilies, and by his exposition of the decalogue.[102] No language can be more explicit, than that in which he asserts the dependence of man for the remission of his sins, on the satisfaction made for them by the obedience and death of Christ. To the one offering presented on the cross, every descendant of Adam, it is declared must be indebted,—not in part merely, but entirely—for the removal of his guilt; and at the same time, to every penitent believer, however condemned by a degenerate priesthood, this highest token of the divine approbation is said to be most assuredly awarded. If, indeed, there be passages in which the reformer speaks of men as "deserving" the blessedness of a future world, we have heard him explain the sense in which he employed such language; and we have witnessed its protest against its being interpreted as at variance with the doctrine, which contemplates the salvation of the soul as being in every view of it purely the work of God.[103]

A prominent article in his religious creed, and

"they would not wilfully or wittingly deserve the curse of God for any "good either in earth or heaven; neither that of man, in as far as it ac- "cordeth with the righteous sentence of God. But with great joy of "soul, they will rather suffer man's wrongful curse, than wittingly or wil- "fully break any one commandment of God. Thereby the honors of this "world, and a keeping of the body in all indulgence may be secured. "But they would rather suffer slander, and back-biting, and imprison- "ment, and exile, and with the help and grace of God, hanging, draw- "ing and quartering, and burning, than to forsake thus the example of "Christ, and the truth of holy writ." Ibid.

[102] See vol. i, c. 3. ii. c. 1.

[103] Ibid. p. 34.

one from which the rest were all more or less deduced, was the election of grace. The church is accordingly described as composed of predestinated persons, and of such alone. "We are "predestinated," he remarks, "that we may "obtain divine acceptance, and become holy; "having received that grace through the humanity of Christ, by which we are rendered finally "pleasing to God. And to me it appears, that "this grace, which is called the grace of predestination, or the charity of final perseverance, "cannot, by any means fail."[104] In another chapter of the same work, he endeavours to shew the consistency of regarding men as elected by their Maker from before the foundation of the world; though their existence then, could be but in the mind and purpose of the Deity. To the question, what is the real cause of the decrees of God, it is replied, "the will of God, or even God himself."[105] In the Trialogus, indeed, similar speculations frequently occur. Nor was it the salvation of men only, but the events of time in general, which were thus viewed as the certain result of preordination. It is in the following manner that he reasons on this subject. "If Christ pro- "phesied of certain events, certainly to come, "such events have been or will be. The antece- "dent, namely that Christ has thus prophesied, "is necessary, and the consequence is also "necessary. The consequence is not in the "power of any man, or of any creature; nor are "the sayings of Christ, or the elections of his mind

CHAP. VIII.

[104] Trial. iii. 7.

[105] Ibid. ii. 14.

CHAP. VIII.

"to be affected by accident. And therefore as it "is necessary that Christ has foretold certain "things, so it is necessary they should come to "pass. By arguments of this kind also, we shew "other events to be necessary, the coming of "which has been determined by God. Nor will "it matter, after what manner God may chose to "inform us, that he had actually so determined, "before the foundation of the world. Let it be "certain, that God has predetermined an event, "and the result is beyond all accident, it must "follow. Now what could hinder this pre-"ordination of events on the part of God? His "knowledge is perfect. His will unvarying. "And all creature-impediments opposed to him "are futile. From these facts, it follows that "whatsoever is future, must necessarily come."[106] The sum of Wycliffe's doctrine on this point, appears to have been, that the divine nature necessarily purposes what is best with respect to the universe; and as the volitions of the Eternal Mind must necessarily affect all the matters over which the Divine prescience extends, a law of necessity must in consequence descend upon all things. Acute, however, as were the reformer's reasonings on such topics, it is probable that the perplexities frequently produced by them in the mind of his opponents, were sometimes felt by himself. In his vernacular compositions such speculations are of less frequent occurrence, rarely obtaining more than a passing notice. But that they were not regarded by Wycliffe, as having the least

[106] Ibid. iii, c. 9.

tendency to impair the feeling of responsibility in men, or to efface the distinctions between vice and virtue, is placed beyond doubt by the facts of his history, and by the general sentiment of his writings.

The remaining articles of his creed are of a more practical character, and more frequently announced. To the scheme of spiritual power so long established in connexion with the see of Rome, and to the many delusions which had facilitated the introduction of the laws of penance, and the customs of pilgrimage, he opposed the simple, but sublime doctrine, of a free remission of sin in virtue of the atonement of Christ. To guard this doctrine also from abuse, he was equally bold in declaring that the penitent alone could be assured of pardon; and that God is more willing to confer the grace of penitence, and all the elements of a heavenly temper, than we are to seek them. "Marvellous," he observes, "it is "that any sinful being dare grant any thing to "another on the merit of saints. For without "the grace and the power of Christ's passion, all "that any saint ever did, may not bring a soul "to heaven." That grace and passion, are at the same time described as including "all merits "which are needful."[107] The last day he remarks, will show, that the judgment of the Supreme is not to be at all influenced, by the often mistaken views of men; and he concludes by praying that "the Almighty of his endless charity, would "destroy the pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, and

[107] MS. On Prelates, c. 13.

CHAP. VIII.

"heresy, discovered by these pretended pardons;
"and make men earnest to keep his commandments,
"and to set their trust fully in Jesus Christ."[108] What the reformer meant by thus trusting in Christ, he frequently explains. In his comment on the passage respecting the brazen serpent, he thus writes. "Here we must know the story of "the old law. How the people were hurt by "the stinging of adders. And Moses prayed "God to tell him a medicine, and God bade "him take an adder of brass, and raising it high "on a tree for the people to look to, to tell them "that those who looked on that adder should "be healed. And all this was a figure of Christ's "hanging on the cross. He was in the form "of the venomous adder; but in his own person "was no venom, even as the adder of brass, had "no venom in it. But as a right looking on that "adder of brass saved the people from the venom "of serpents, so a right looking by full belief "on Christ saveth his people."[109] It follows, therefore, that "Christ died not for his own sins "as thieves die for their's, but as our brother, "who himself might not sin, he died for the "sins that others had done. The righteousness "of God, therefore, and his grace, and the sal-"vation of men, all thus moved Christ to die."[110] Such passages prepare us for the reformer's more definite statements on this article, as when he affirms that without faith it is impossible to please God; that the virtuous deeds of the unbelieving are devoid of a principle of righteousness; that

---

[108] Ibid. [109] Hom. Bib. Reg. [110] Ibid. 103.

faith in the Redeemer is sufficient to salvation, and that without the admixture of other causes; and that men are righteous, but by a participation in the Saviour's righteousness.[111]

Nearly allied to the doctrine of justification by faith, is that of sanctification by the agency of the Divine Spirit; and in the writings of Wycliffe, they hold that relation to each other, which we find allotted to them in the sacred scriptures. The text which affirms that with respect to the duties of piety, "our sufficiency is wholly of God," is thus treated. "Since among the works of "man, thinking would seem to be most in his "power; and yet, even his thoughts must be "received from God, much more is it so with "the other works of men. And thus should "we put off pride, and wholly trust in Jesus "Christ. For he who may nought *think* of "himself, may *do* nought of himself. Thus all "our sufficiency is of God, through the mediation "of Jesus Christ."[112] It is afterwards observed, that "thus of sinful and ungrateful men, God "maketh good men, and all the goodness in this "cometh of God. Nor trouble we about any farther "cause, since God himself is certainly the first "cause."[113] But with statements of this description, a multitude of which might be selected from his sermons, there are others of a more modified class which occur with still greater frequency. Men, it is remarked, should be without exception admonished, that they receive not the grace of

[111] De Veritate Scripturæ Expos. Dec. James's Apology.
[112] Hom. Bib. Reg. 104. [113] Ibid. 17.

CHAP. VIII.

God in vain, since, in every instance, where such conduct is exhibited, "the default is not in "God, but all the default is in his servants."[114] Again, it is said, that "God withdraweth not his "grace, except man shall abuse it; and then the "righteousness of God requireth that the sinner "should be punished."[115] These passages viewed together, may remind the reader of the apostle's language, "work out your own salvation with "fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who "worketh in you, to will and to do of his "good pleasure."[116] It is evident, also, that this supernatural aid, was understood by the reformer as extended to all men, so as to render the condemnation of each who may perish, the just consequence of resisting the light from above. Thus pursuing a comparison between the advent of Christ, and the dawning of the day, he remarks, "It is now a great sin not to arise and to throw "open our windows, for this spiritual light is ready "to shine unto all men who will open to receive "it."[117] The doctrine of Wycliffe, therefore was, that the men who are saved from the power of their natural depravity as well as from the burden of their guilt, are thus saved simply according to the grace of God; and yet that the mysterious arrangements of Heaven are such, that wherever final ruin happens, the lost will be found to have been the agents of their own destruction. To the difficulties of this creed, the reformer could not have been insensible, but it was evidently

---

[114] Ibid.
[115] Epist. Phil. ii. 12, 13.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Hom. Bib. Reg. 17.

regarded as that of the scriptures, and as exposed to less objection than any other which might be proposed in its room.

It is plain from these extracts, and from others in the previous chapters of this work, that Melancthon could have known but little of Wycliffe's theological productions, when describing him as "ignorant of the righteousness of "faith."[118] If by that doctrine he meant a reliance on the atonement of Christ as the only and the certain medium of acceptance for the guilty, it is unquestionable that this truth was the favorite and the most efficient article in the faith of the english, as well as in that of the german reformer. It must be acknowledged that this tenet is more frequently adverted to in the writings of Luther, than in those of Wycliffe; and his notices respecting it, are also frequently more definite, because distinguishing more commonly between the acceptance of offenders in virtue of the Saviour's death, and the growth of devout affections in the heart under the influence of the Divine Spirit. But that such was the design

[118] Wycliffe is further accused by this writer, of holding seditious notions in politics, and of being obscure in the matter of the eucharist. This conviction is stated as the result of "*looking* into Wycliffe," and it is obviously the effect of a very partial attention to the reformer's statements. On the principles of civil government, and on the sacrament of the altar, the rector of Lutterworth differed from Luther and Melancthon, but as being more enlightened. As a question of the reason, the consubstantiation of the Lutheran church, is scarcely a remove from the transubstantiation of the papacy; and we have seen the firmness with which both were rejected by our countryman. His views of civil government are also before the reader. But were it possible to vindicate his name in these particulars still more clearly, he has opponents who would not fail to reiterate these charges as those of Melancthon, and as though no man had ever dared to question their truth. Lewis, c. viii.

CHAP. VIII.

of the Redeemer's sacrifice, was not more distinctly apprehended by the professor of Wittemburgh, than by the rector of Lutterworth; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent confidence with the one than with the other. The Spirit of God is at the same time contemplated as the source of all those influences which lead the mind to a knowledge of the truth, which nourish it in all the graces of piety, and by which men are prepared to bear the cross of the confessor, and the martyr. Frequently, indeed, the word salvation is employed as comprehending the articles of justification and sanctification. But this is also the manner of the sacred writers, and if to distinguish between these essential parts of the christian redemption, is to regard the first as proceeding exclusively from the atonement of Christ, and the second as flowing entirely from the grace of the Spirit; if it be also to view the one as consisting in a change of relation to God, and the other as including an assimilation of the spirit of man to that of the Redeemer; then these doctrines, and the difference between them, was evidently familiar to the mind of Wycliffe.

It is in the following language, that he describes the self-denial and devotedness, which the gospel requires of its sincere disciples. "Christ not "compelling, but freely counselling every man to "seek a perfect life saith, 'Let him deny himself, "and take up his cross and follow me.' Let us "then deny ourselves in whatever we have made "ourselves by sin, and such as we are made by "grace, let us continue. If a proud man be con-"verted to Christ and is made humble, he hath

"denied himself. If a covetous man ceaseth to "covet, and giveth of his own to relieve the "needy, he hath denied himself. If an impure "man changeth his life and becometh chaste, he "hath denied himself, as St. Gregory saith. He "who withstandeth and forsaketh the unreason-"able will of the flesh denieth himself. The "cross of Christ is taken when we shrink not from "contempt, for the love of the truth; when man "is crucified unto the world, and the world is "crucified unto him, and he setteth its joy at "nought. It is not enough to bear the cross "of a painful life, except we follow Christ in his "virtues, in meekness, love, and heavenly desire. "He taketh the cross who is ready to meet all "peril for God; if need be to die rather than "to forsake Christ. And whoso taketh not thus "the cross, and followeth not Christ thus, is not "worthy to be his disciple.—Lord Jesus, turn us "to thee, and we shall be turned! Heal thou us, "and then we shall be verily holy; for without "grace and help from thee, may no man be truly "turned or healed. For they are but scorners, "who to-day turn to God, and to-morrow turn "away; who to-day do their penance, and to-"morrow turn again to their former evils. What "is turning to God? Nothing but turning from "the world, from sin, and from the fiend. What "is turning from God, but turning to the changing "things of this world, to delight in the creatures, "the lusts of the flesh, and the works of the fiend. "To be turned from the world, is to set at nought "its joys, and to suffer meekly, all bitterness, "slanders, and deceits, for the love of Christ. To

CHAP. VIII.

" leave all occupations unlawful and unprofitable " to the soul, so that man's will and thought " become dead to the things which the world " loveth and worshippeth." The devices of Satan with which all have to contend, are said in the conclusion, to be particularly directed against such as seek this peculiar sanctity. " He stu- " dieth to bring against us all manner of temp- " tations and tribulations according as he seeth that " by the mercy of God, we are escaped out of his " power. For he seeketh nothing so much as to " separate men from the pure and the everlasting " love of Jesus Christ, and to make them love " perishing things and the uncleanness of this " world."[109]

I have ventured to remark, that had Wycliffe been a less devout man, than he appears in such passages as that now cited, he would not, perhaps, have been deserted by certain of his political adherents. It is at the same time no less obvious, that had his zeal been directed to devotional topics alone, as was the case with Bradwardine, St. Edmund, and others; his days might have passed in comparative tranquillity. He extended the range of his theological inquiries somewhat farther than such persons had done, and applied his doctrine so as to annihilate the papal scheme of merit. It was thus that he sought the religious improvement of mankind; and it was in doing this, that he wittingly braved the worst evils which mortal resentment could bring upon him.

---

[109] MS. Of perfect life.

CHAPTER IX.

Observations on the character of Wycliffe, and on the connection of his doctrine with the reformation of the sixteenth century.

WYCLIFFE'S CLAIM TO ORIGINALTY——HIS LEARNING, AND INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER——HIS PATRIOTISM AND LOVE OF MANKIND——HIS PIETY——LUTHER AND WYCLIFFE COMPARED——THE BONES OF WYCLIFFE BURNT——STATE OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE IN ENGLAND, FROM THE DECEASE OF WYCLIFFE TO THE AGE OF LUTHER——ACCESSION OF THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER——CHARACTER OF THE PERSECUTIONS SANCTIONED BY HENRY THE FOURTH——THE DOCTRINE OF WYCLIFFE SURVIVES THEM——THE MARTYRDOM OF LORD COBHAM——CONCLUSION.

Wycliffe's claim to originalty.

THE later descendants of the Waldenses have frequently cheered the gloom of their poverty and seclusion, by reflecting that "the mother "church, of all reformed and protestant churches,"[1] found her asylum for ages in their native fastnesses. But if we look attentively to the page of history, it will be obvious that the Great Protector of the faithful, depends as little on localities, as on persons, in preserving his truth amid the convulsions of the world. Thus it is in a very different country, and among a far different people, that Wycliffe becomes a reformer; and that long before any favorable impression could

[1] Bresse. Hist. Vaudois, c. ii.

CHAP. IX.

well have been made upon his mind, as to the claims of the men, who had made so noble a stand against the errors of the papacy in the vallies of Piedmont. Nor does it appear even to the close of our reformer's history, that his researches were materially aided by the writings of those early advocates of primitive christianity. A few imperfect notices do indeed occur respecting them, in some of his latest compositions, and such as indicate that he had learned to regard them as a people who had suffered much, and unjustly from the tyranny of Rome. But though constantly referring to the sources of his information, and evidently concerned to shield his opinions from the charge of novelty, by giving to them as wide a previous existence as possible, no acknowledgment of obligation to the descendants of the Paulicians, or to the disciples of Peter Waldo, can be found in his works. We have seen also, that in that kind of resistance which he so vigorously sustained, he was left without the aid of precedent from the history of his own country. Even the errors of the established system which he held to the last, imply the independence of his mind, no less than those particulars in which he dissented from it. It is true the doctrine of an intermediate state as acknowledged by him, was comparatively harmless. It was, nevertheless, one which no modification could so have guarded, as to have rendered it acceptable to a genuine disciple of Waldo, or of Claude of Turin. His concessions also relating to the customs of patronage, and to the authority of the magistrate with respect to the

affairs of the church, were not of Waldensian origin, but were precisely such, as from the nature of his early connexions and pursuits, might have been expected to survive the departure of other opinions, which we find him successively discarding. On the appearance of such a luminary in a benighted land, it is common at once to conclude that its lustre must have been attracted from without. But is not this to think defectively of the providence of God, and of the power of his word and Spirit? The writings of the more enlightened of the fathers, and the pages of inspiration, were familiar to Wycliffe at an early period; and to the end of his career, these were almost exclusively his guides. Hence, in opposing the spiritual power of the popes, and certain doctrinal corruptions of the hierarchy, the reformer evidently regards himself as associated with the devout men of very remote times, but as standing almost alone amidst the generations which had appeared since the fatal period of Satan's enlargement. CHAP. IX.

His learning and intellectual character.

In judging of his learning, and of his intellectual character, whether guided by the testimony of his friends or of his enemies, we must consider him as being in these respects the most extraordinary man of his day. Compared, indeed, with the present state of scholarship, his attainments would be far from pre-eminent; but it is enough, if they are found to be such when viewed in connexion with the age in which he lived. His election to the chair of theology in the principal seminary of this kingdom, bespeaks his proficiency in the science of the schoolmen; and

CHAP. IX.

the reluctant testimony of opponents, in common with his numerous writings, afford additional evidence of the industry and acuteness which he brought to that department of study. His appointment also, as the representative of the sovereign in the negotiation with the papal delegates at Bruges, will be allowed to suggest that his knowledge of the laws of his country, and of the church, was deemed worthy of confidence, on the most difficult and important of the questions then at issue, between our monarchs and the see of Rome. To such acquirements—which indeed with the more studious of the clergy, were in general the object of ardent pursuit—Wycliffe added an acquaintance with the sacred scriptures which was peculiar to himself. Other schoolmen may have possessed much of his familiarity with the subtleties of their boasted philosophy, and with the writings of the fathers; and others may have been his rivals in the study of the civil, or of the canon law; but it was the combination of his attainments on all these points, together with his sound scriptual knowledge, which rendered him so illustrious in the esteem of his followers, and so much an object of apprehension to the abettors of existing corruptions. It is not pretended that his taste was free from the barbarism which pervaded the literature of the period; nor that his authorities are always the most pertinent that might have been adduced; nor that they are given in every instance with all the caution that was desirable. But it may be affirmed that his learning, which was unusual in its variety, was no less so in the degree of its correctness, including

more, perhaps, of truth and wisdom, than may be discovered in the opinions of any other man exposed to the same disadvantages. CHAP. IX.

It is evident, also, that to separate in so great a measure between the strength and weakness of established doctrines, required the application of no common energy, and the possession of much ingenuousness and courage. In the christianity which prevailed around him, the pure faith of the gospel was superseded by a host of grovelling superstitions; its simple ritual had given place to a multitude of heathen and childish ceremonies; and its ministers, from being the shepherds of the flock of Christ, had become the members of a worldly hierarchy, nearly all the tendencies of which, were to wed the communities beneath them to ignorance and to irreligion. So artfully too, had the scheme been devised, that the delinquent priest, however much delinquent, was almost secure from the approach of chastisement. On this state of things centuries had shed their influence, apparently but to increase its stability, and to render the prospects of the human race, with respect to many of its circumstances, but the more foreboding. Unawed, however, by the force of popular, and long established opinions, Wycliffe ventured to publish the faith of the scriptures, condemning the frauds and superstitions by which it had been for ages disfigured or concealed. The simple and forgotten modes of worship which the same authority enjoins, he often ventured to inculcate. And thus restoring religion to its place in the reason and the affection, he called on every hierarchy of Christendom,

CHAP. IX.

and on the pontiff, and his cardinals at their head, to relinquish their worldly occupations, and the incumbrances of wealth, and to expect the preservation of their influence on earth, but as their maxims and temper should be known to breath the spirit of heaven! Against certain points in this bold theory, many objections might be urged; but it is, nevertheless, one which no ordinary genius would have had power to conceive. By a few, all its parts were hailed as devout and wise; by more, it was only partially approved; and by a greater number it was denounced as the madness of revolutionary zeal. But while subject to the imputation of every motive, which might serve to cover his name and his tenets with odium; and while threatened with the heaviest penalties which the native clergy or the papal power could impose; the only change in the conduct of the reformer, from the period of first announcing his peculiar doctrines to the last hours of his life, is that they are repeated with a growing constancy, and with a still louder emphasis. The cords which had bound so many generations, were thus broken; and scarcely less remarkable was the vigour which sustained the purpose of his mind, amid the storm which lowered early, and increased in darkness and violence to the moment of his death. It was his more penetrating apprehension of the nature of religion, and of the principles involved in the papal ascendancy, which led him to surpass such men as Grossteste, and Fitz Ralph, whose attacks were limited to the outworks of the apostacy; and at the same time to put at defiance the charge of Manicheism which had been preferred

often unjustly, but always with too much success against the continental reformers. So comprehensive, indeed, were his views of christianity and of the claims of his species, that the movements which have favored the diffusion of scriptural piety, or of general knowledge, in later times, might be shewn to have been the result, in no few instances, of adopting maxims which John de Wycliffe laboured to inculcate.

His patriotism and his philanthropy.

It is a part of his praise, therefore, that he was a sincere lover of his country, and of the human race. He sought, indeed, to eradicate opinions which an extended ancestry had revered as true, and to reform institutions which they had designated sacred. Nor is he free from the charge of employing harsh language, when encountering opponents who were regarded as the criminal abettors of erroneous doctrine. But it is in the same degree true, that his innovations and severity were alike the result of the most honorable, and even of kindly motives. Churchmen, he often taught, should be the chief benefactors of the states of Christendom; but he affirms, that they had long proved the chief obstacle in the way of its social and religious improvement; and he loved his species too well, not to visit their most injurious oppressors with his sharpest rebuke. His invectives, however, were never more coarse or violent than were those with which he was himself commonly assailed.[2] This peculiarity, so

[2] Dr. Lingard more than once adverts to the "coarseness" of Wycliffe's invectives. It is proper that the reader should know what claims to refinement pertained to his adversaries. The clerical historian, Walsingham, accompanies his notice of the reformer's death with

CHAP. IX.

offensive to modern refinement, belonged to the age, more than to the man. It may be remarked also, that a more compromising temper and mode of attack, would perhaps have failed to arrest any deep attention, or to meet successfully, the yet coarser modes of resistance with which he was obliged to contend. The disease was desperate, and had long baffled all milder treatment. That the reform which he contemplated, would be conducive in the highest degree to the welfare of his country, and of human nature, was in his judgment unquestionable; since it would turn the resources of every state into their proper channel, and confer on every christian man a freedom of access to the fountain of truth, and his long lost right of deducing his creed from the scriptures alone, and of regulating his hopes and fears but by that authority,—rendering the civil sword in every land the foe of the vicious, and the friend of the devout. That an odious and destructive vassalage, had been imposed on the human mind by the papal power, was believed to be as little problematical as human existence; and with all the energy of such a conviction, he called on the enslaved to arise and be free. That sentimental kind of deference for the faith of remote ge-

---

the following mild description of his character. "The devil's instrument, "church's enemy, people's confusion, heretic's idol, hypocrite's mirror, "schism's broacher, hatred's sore, lies' forger, flatteries' sink, who at his "death despaired like Cain, and stricken by the horrible judgments of "God, breathed forth his wicked soul to the dark mansion of the black "devil." The opponents of Wycliffe, and of his followers, frequently taxed their invention thus; and the reformer sometimes attempted a vindication of his own conduct by appealing to the irony of Elijah when encountering the priests of Baal. (Hom. Bib. Reg.) But where the claim to inspiration is relinquished, the precedent fails.

nerations, which is often indulged at the cost of the most serious obligations, with respect to the living and unborn, he appears not at all to have comprehended. The past was reviewed but to imbibe its truth, and the future was anticipated but to become its benefactor. It should be noticed also, that almost the only credible tradition preserved in the town of Lutterworth, as illustrating the character of Wycliffe, describes him as most exemplary in his parochial duties, devoting a portion of the morning in each day, to relieving the necessitous, and ministering the consolations of religion to the aged, the sick, and the dying. It was thus he united the commanding faculties, which anticipated a reform of christianity, more complete than the genius of protestantism in the sixteenth century ventured to contemplate, with that obscure condescension, and assiduity, which became the pastor of a village cure. CHAP. IX.

His piety.

This consistency, so strictly pervading the character of our reformer, will hardly admit of explanation except as arising from religious principle. Under that influence, he might learn to suspect the purity of his zeal, if directed against the magnificent and the powerful, to the neglect of services much more retired and humble in their character, but equally his duty. An attention to social obligation, so minute as to fill up almost every interstice within its circle, should be considered as bespeaking a consciousness of that Presence which is in every place, and which enforces its claims with the same authority in all. Such motives also, are alone sufficient to explain the constancy of Wycliffe, in adhering to a cause, which long before

CHAP. IX.

his death, must have been seen as allied to almost every kind of privation and suffering. His doctrines with respect to ecclesiastical office and emolument, swept away the possibility of acquiring wealth, or of possessing any other authority in his own order, than would be inseparable from the weight of his character. Accordingly, a sentiment which he frequently reiterated was, "if we hope to be rewarded in this life, our "hope of heavenly bliss perisheth."[3] In another discourse, he remarks, "Christ came into the "world to bear witness to the truth, and to en-"lighten the world. And as Christ, God and "man, came hither with this intent, should not "the truth keep his disciples while standing thus "for its defence, labouring even unto death? "Christ, and the Baptist, and many more, had "not their reward here for doing this; but in "heaven, they have bliss, hidden from men."[4] Of such force, indeed, were these religious convictions, that through life, they appear to have imparted a melancholy character to his mind, and such as it required all his watchfulness and spirituality to counteract. In defence of the undue importance attached to singing as a part of public worship, and especially to vindicate the aid of instrumental music in such services, it was usual to remark, that in the visions of heaven such employments are exhibited as engaging the chief attention of the blessed. To this it was sorrowfully answered, that heaven is indeed the place of praise, while the earth is, and ought to be, "a valley of

[3] Hom. Bib. Reg. 154. [4] Ibid. 174.

"weeping."[5] To justify this gloomy feeling, he adds at another time; "if a man bethink him how "the will of God is reversed by sin, which reigneth "in the world, both in persons and communities, he "shall have matter enough for mourning, and little "reason to be glad."[5] And such appears to have been the habit of his mind. During my long familiarity with his writings, I have often seen him roused into holy indignation, smitten with grief, or subdued by compassion; but rarely have I been able to contemplate his heart as the seat of pleasurable feeling, and it is difficult to suppose that his brow was frequently brightened by a smile. Degenerate, however, as the world had become, his benevolence never forsakes its people; and deeply as christianity was corrupted, no shade of apprehension would appear to have crossed his mind as to its native truth and excellence. Rarely does he conclude a composition, however brief, without recording a fervent prayer for the blessing of God on its design, and as rarely does he advert to his sufferings, without expressing his gratitude to the Author of the gospel for the encouragements afforded by that record of mercy. The impression, indeed, which must be made by a candid and adequate attention to the history and writings of Wycliffe, is not only that his piety was that of the scriptures, but that it resulted from a strength of faith, and was distinguished by an unearthliness of feeling, which are of no frequent occurrence in the annals of the church.

[5] MS. Of feigned contemplative life.

CHAP. IX.

Comparison of Luther and Wycliffe.

In the school of the reformers, the precedence in honor has been generally given to Martin Luther, and perhaps there is not another in that distinguished class of men, who may be compared with him to so little disadvantage as John de Wycliffe. Both were nursed in the superstitions which they were destined to oppose, and both passed by slow and unanticipated steps to the adoption of their final sentiments. They were also devout men from their youth, and before meditating any hostile movement with respect to the hierarchy, were in some degree aware of its abuses. But the claim to originality and enterprise, must be certainly awarded to the englishmen. Germany had never ceased to be the asylum of separatists from the Romish communion, which was far from being the case with England; and the disputes between our monarchs and the papacy, were partial, and soon terminated, when compared with those which had divided the empire, and the church.[6] There was an advance in the cause

[6] Oldy's Librarian, a copy of which is in the British Museum, contains some curious extracts from a dialogue between a knight and an ecclesiastic on the subject of clerical power and possessions. It is one of the many pieces of the same description which appeared under the sanction, either direct or indirect, of the Emperor; and one commending itself particularly to our notice as the production of the W. Occam, the great english schoolman, and contemporary of Wycliffe. The ecclesiastic complains of the illegal burdens imposed on his order, and the knight enquires as to "the law" which had been broken; and on hearing that the law meant was the decrees of the popes and the enactments of the fathers, it is remarked, that such codes of legislation may serve the purpose of churchmen, but their obligation on the laity is said to be a dream. Hence the soldier professes to scorn the upstart pride of Boniface VIII. in asserting, as had been recently done, his supremacy over the princes and the states of the world. The ministers of the sanctuary, it is contended, should be provided with every thing really necessary to their support. But that the men, who in scripture are compared to workmen,

of civil liberty, and a revival of learning, observable in the fourteenth century, which were highly favorable to the formation of the character of Wycliffe; but two centuries later, the same causes did much more toward inspiring the genius of Luther. The court of Cæsar, had been for ages, the retreat of men who had most successfully assailed the secular ambition of the pontiffs; and while the living admirers of the Greek and Roman classics, who had every where multiplied, were with few exceptions, impatient to effect a reformation of the established system, the councils of

---

to hired servants, and even to the ox that treadeth out the corn, should aspire to become the superior of lords and sovereigns, is treated as a marvellous event. It is accordingly added, "If the authority of the "king were to fail you where would be your repose? Would not the "poor and prodigal nobles, if they should consume their own property, "turn to your's? The royal hands, therefore, are your bulwark: the "king's peace is your peace; the king's safety is your safety." There is some forcible sarcasm in the following passage. "It is because kings "and princes, at their own expence and danger, defend you, and ex- "pose themselves gratuitously to death for your sake, that you repose "under your shades, eat splendidly, drink joyously, lie down in orna- "mented beds, sleep quietly, and wanton with soft instruments of music. "You therefore are the only lords. Kings and princes are your ser- "vants!" When the wealth of the church is said to be the property of God, it is replied, "we mean not to revoke what was given to the Su- "preme, but to apply it to those uses for which the gift was made." Nor does it avail to deprecate this interference of lay authority, with respect to clerical wealth, for it follows that unless the revenue possessed to relieve the sick, the poor, and the oppressed, be so applied, in every nation the laity who should be faithful executors to a humane ancestry, "must have to do therewith." The shade of Cæsar's throne was Occam's protection while uttering such sentiments. And such sentiments had been for some years familiar to the german people when Luther appeared, who was well acquainted with the works of Occam, and never ceased to revere him. It is also well known that the works of Huss deeply impressed the mind of the Saxon reformer. See his preface to the works of the Bohemian, p. 27. He states that his "astonish- "ment on reading them was incredible." Lenfant. Oldy's Librarian. Turner's Hist. v. 107. 108.

CHAP. IX.

Basle, Constance, and Pisa, had exposed its departing strength. At the same time Huss, and Jerome, and their followers, had supplied examples of resistance, which many a good man must have been disposed to emulate. Amid these foreboding appearances also, the maxims of the papal court continue to be characterized by their ancient perfidy and avarice: and the german ecclesiastics, whose secular character had even surpassed that of their brethren in England, appear to have judged it better that the loss of their entire authority should be hazarded, than that any part of it should be surrendered at the call of the people. But, if in these circumstances the professor of Wittemburg possessed advantages superior to those of his illustrious predecessor, it is well known that they were by no means neglected. With both, the philosophy of the schools had absorbed some of the most important years of life, and if the elder may be considered as the superior of the younger in that branch of scholarship; this probably arose from the fact that in the fourteenth century, less had been said to impair the reputation of that vain science. In every thing coming within the province of taste, Luther is not less defective than Wycliffe, though his opportunities for improvement in this respect were very far greater.

They were agreed in vesting the sacred scriptures with supreme authority, and in regarding the works of Augustine, as next to them in the scale of importance. But it appears that the youthful mind of the German had been more completely subdued by superstition, than that of our

countryman; and his escape from its thraldom to the liberty conferred by the gospel, was by means of a more painful process. Hence, the doctrine of justification by faith, is adverted to with a constancy and fervour in the writings of Luther, which it will be confessed are not so observable in those of our reformer. In the theology of both, however, this article, though somewhat differently taught, formed the lever which they endeavoured to fix on the realities of a future world; and without the aid of which, they never anticipated their projected movement of the present. On the doctrine of the eucharist, Wycliffe was far more enlightened, than his great parallel; and his views of ecclesiastical polity were more severely primitive; but both were confident, almost to a fault, not only in the goodness of their cause, but in the strength of the reasonings with which they attempted to support it; discovering through life, a remarkable propensity to commit their thoughts and feelings to writing; and in their manner of sending forth their compositions, evincing the same indifference to literary fame. From these causes, it sometimes happened that their premises did not fully warrant their conclusions; and it is no unusual thing to find a paragraph beginning with conceptions of surprising vigour, and ending with sentences which as they evidently grew under the hand of the writer, and were in no way revised, are scarcely less characterized by redundance and obscurity. This heedlessness of literary reputation, arose plainly from that sense of duty, to which both had learned to bow with the most

CHAP. IX.

CHAP. IX.

religious submission. And, in truth, if the actions of men, extending through a series of years, may ever be regarded as presenting a certain developement of character, the praise of disinterestedness, must be allotted in a high degree to Luther, and in at least an equal measure to Wycliffe. In each, there was much that favored a life of studious retirement, more than that course of boisterous activity into which they were drawn. To such activities, the physical energies of the Saxon reformer were more equal, than were those of his great forerunner. But it is worthy of observation, that the call which the sale of indulgencies supplied to the one, arose from the vices of the same mendicant fraternities in the case of the other, and that with both the conviction of duty, was happily more powerful than the passion for study and seclusion.

Luther, indeed, began his career somewhat earlier than the english reformer; but it is difficult to avoid the suspicion, that during the latter years of his life, his mind was in some important respects retrograde, rather than progressive; while it is evident, that the intelligence and the zeal of Wycliffe, brighten and become more intense as his last days are approaching. It is, however, in his contempt for the terrors of power, that the German has been considered as almost without a rival; and if we credit the assertions of some writers, it is on this point that our countryman will least admit of comparison with him. It should be remembered, however, that the persons who have been most forward in accusing the rector of Lutterworth, of having sometimes descended

to a timid and disingenuous policy, have not feared to impute the same temporizing caution to the professor of Wittemberg.[7] If the proof of courage is to be regulated at all by the degree of peril which is encountered; it may be doubted whether Luther ever stood in the jeopardy, which was for some years attendant on the footsteps of Wycliffe. It was his felicity to be speedily surrounded by a host of partisans, numbering princes and a large portion of Christendom among his followers. But during the year immediately preceding his death, the Father of the english reformation is seen deserted by the most powerful of his accredited disciples, oppressed by the strength of the hierarchy, and fully anticipating martyrdom; yet evincing an industry in the cause of reform, and a courage in his attempts to promote it, which Luther did not surpass, even in the most favorable periods of his history. Still it is the integrity and the firmness of our reformer which his adversaries have been chiefly employed in impeaching, and the degree of success attending their efforts has arisen from their assuming that he had published obnoxious opinions previous to 1378, which do not appear in the paper then submitted to his judges; and that his subsequent confessions on the eucharist were not a fair expression of his real doctrine on that subject; but though both these things have been so long and so often assumed, it has fully appeared, that they are alike and altogether untrue. We know not, indeed, what the issue would have been, had the appalling test been

[7] Lingard's Hist. vi. 121—146.

CHAP. IX.

really applied; but it is certain that the language employed by the rector of Lutterworth in the series of his works, appearing subsequent to the first prosecution which he was called to sustain, is precisely that of a man who has resolved to set all danger at defiance, and to prepare himself by every available motive against the worst that may happen. Sir Thomas More expressed himself delighted, and grateful to heaven, because enabled in an interview with his accusers to act with an intrepidity which had made a retreat impossible.[8] Wycliffe may have felt the importance of such subordinate aids; and it must be admitted that the man who describes himself as constantly exposed to the trial of martyrdom, would hardly have insisted on that severe duty with frequency and emphasis, as incumbent on all who would not perish on account of preferring the ease of the present to the bliss of the future, had he not studiously prepared his spirit to meet even that conflict.

Upon the whole, therefore, we may perhaps venture to conclude, that while there certainly were some points of dissimilarity between the two great leaders of the english and of the german reformations; the difference between them is more apparent than real, and such as will not be found in the elements of their character, so much as in the circumstances of their history. Nor is it altogether mysterious, that a more qualified estimate should have so far prevailed respecting the cha-

---

[8] "In good faith I rejoiced son that I had given the devil a foul fall, "and that with those lords I have gone so far, as without great shame I "could never go back again." Cayley's Life of Sir Thomas More, i. 164, 165.

racter of Wycliffe, than has generally obtained in reference to that of Luther. The bold antagonist of Tetzil, laboured as we have seen, under better auspices, and with more success; and whatever protestant learning or genius could do, has been generously done, toward vindicating his conduct and opinions from the aspersions of his enemies. But in the annals of this country, there are hundreds of men, whose names should not be repeated with that of Wycliffe, to the illustration of whose history, a much larger share of industry and talent has been applied. CHAP. IX.

Such, however, was the character of John de Wycliffe. Thirty winters had passed over his grave, when in the council of Constance, more than three hundred articles, said to be extracted from his manuscripts were condemned, and with them the whole of his writings. Nor was this anathema considered as an adequate expression of abhorrence. To the council it appeared, and as the result of the strictest inquiry, that John Wycliffe died an obstinate heretic. And it was accordingly farther decreed, that his memory should be pronounced infamous; and that his bones, if to be distinguished from those of the faithful, should be removed from the consecrated ground in which they were deposited, and cast upon a dunghill. Tradition and history report, that in pursuance of this sentence, his remains were taken from their place, reduced to ashes, and thrown into the river which still passes the town of Lutterworth. Thence, in the language of Fuller, they were conducted to the Severn, the narrow Seas, and the Ocean; and thus be- Burning of the bones of Wycliffe.

CHAP. IX.

came the emblem of his doctrine, which was to flow from the province to the nation, and from the nation, to the many kingdoms of the world.[9] That it shall thus extend, "From the river, to the ends "of the earth," we learn from the highest authority.

State of the reformed doctrine in England, from the decease of Wycliffe to the age of Luther.

During the period which intervened between the decease of the reformer, and the offering of this pitiful insult to his remains, some important changes had taken place in the affairs of the Anglican church, and in the government of the country. The wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, and the reformation under Henry the eighth, belong to the most prominent facts of english history; and it is not from our most popular historians, that the leading causes of either may be readily ascertained. Under Richard the second, and still more during the reign of his illustrious predecessor, the clergy had learned to dread the consequences of too near an alliance between the secular nobility and the crown. On the accession of Henry the fourth, churchmen succeeded to much of that influence which had been previously possessed by the lay aristocracy; and elated with the change, they were not satisfied with resisting every attempt to lessen that opulence, which had so long exposed their order to suspicion and complaint; but to this powerful cause of discontent, they still added the exhibition of a character which tended to deterioration rather than improvement. In the mean while the most

[9] Church History, 171, 172. Fox. Acts. The disinterment was not until thirteen years subsequent to the sentence of the council of Constance. Lenfant Hist. ubi supra.

childish and dangerous fictions in the superstitions of the age, were pertinaciously encouraged: and with these impolitic proceedings, a system of persecution was annexed, more relentless than had been previously known in this kingdom. The latter expedient, it was vainly hoped, would be sufficient to extinguish the disaffection which the former circumstances continued to excite. A feeling of distrust, and waryness, was thus induced among the people, and it would not have been surprising if much of the character of the Spaniard, had been grafted on the better properties of the Englishman. But by these measures the opinions of such as were impatient of tyranny, were rather confirmed than shaken, preparing them to become the abettors, and very innocently too, of almost any movement which promised them a change of masters. To the prevalence of the disaffection which was thus produced and kept alive, we must not fail to advert, if we would explain the readiness, with which the houses of York and Lancaster brought the nation to join in their disastrous conflicts; or if we would account for the security of Henry the eighth, while separating the church of England, as with a single stroke from the chair of St. Peter. Through the whole of this disorderly interval the king and the clergy, while agreed in the exercise of almost every domestic oppression, continued with slight intermissions, to set the dangerous example of resisting certain encroachments of the pontiffs; and at the same time, not only the humbler classes of the laity, but many both among the mendicant orders, and among the secular clergy themselves, are

CHAP. IX.

found variously favoring the doctrines of Wycliffe. By some, the opinions of that reformer were embraced, so far only as they related to what was most objectionable in the existing superstitions, or to the secular encroachments of the hierarchy. By others, they were adopted principally on account of their religious character, or their immediate connexion with piety; and if these parties were not equally prepared to become martyrs in the cause of their creed, they were alike disposed to favor any change, which tended to abridge the power of a depraved and merciless priesthood, daily goading them to madness. On the continent also, the writings of Wycliffe were the means of reviving and of greatly extending the spirit of the reformation; and the noble conduct of Huss, and Jerome, and their followers, while acknowledging our illustrious countryman as their principal instructor, was not to be lost on the mind of his injured disciples in this kingdom. About the period of Wycliffe's decease, a spirited intercourse commenced between the advocates of the protestant doctrine in England, and in other states; and it was kept up in the face of every attempt to suppress it, until this nation, and a large portion of Europe, became united in rejecting the whole of that authority, which had been so long conceded to the pontiffs as their proper inheritance.

Such is the outline, which it was my intention to have filled up in the form of an extended supplementary chapter to the life of Wycliffe, but the space occupied by other matters forbids the attempt. A brief selection of such facts, as may serve to illustrate the spirit with which the tenets

of the rector of Lutterworth were maintained; and the character of the opposition with which his disciples were called to struggle, until the appearance of Luther, must suffice.

Progress of persecution.

The persecutions which shortened the days of our reformer, were to be succeeded by others of a more sanguinary character. In 1393, the success of the weapons hitherto employed against heresy, had proved to be so partial, that an instrument was obtained from Richard, empowering the archbishop of Canterbury, as legate of the apostolic see, and also his suffragans to "correct "all who should obstinately preach or maintain, "whether publicly or privately, any conclusion as "from the sacred scriptures, while contrary to "the determinations of the church." Such offenders were to be committed to the prison of the bishop, or of the sheriff, as the prelates should determine; and so to be treated, "that the sharp-"ness of their sufferings" might bring them to repentance. The secret places, in which such preachers were accustomed to meet their "fautors "and accomplices," had enabled them to elude the vigilance of their adversaries. But that no such refuge might serve them in future, the civil authorities are instructed to give all publicity to the royal proclamation; and a penalty is denounced on all, of whatever rank, who may henceforth presume to shelter the delinquent.[10]

But it was less difficult to deliver such instructions, than to secure their execution. The leading men, among the disciples of Wycliffe, were pro-

[10] Fox. i. 658.

CHAP. IX.

bably aware that the obnoxious instrument was less that of the sovereign, than of an interested party, whom it was considered important to please. We know that only two years later, certain members of the house of commons ventured to agitate questions relating to a reformation of the church, which were of a much bolder character than had been at any time contemplated in that assembly. Their petition consisted of twelve conclusions, and was to the following purport. The church of England from the age in which she began to dote on temporalities, after the example of Rome her step-mother, has declined in faith, hope, and charity, and has surrendered their place to pride, and all deadly sin, as experience manifests. The established forms of priestly ordination, are human inventions, and as the gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot exist in connexion with deadly sin, it is impious to pretend that they always accompany the performance of that rite. The celibacy of the clergy, and of the religious, is the parent of the worst of crimes; and imposes a restraint, which men so addicted to intemperance must frequently violate. Reform, in this particular, should commence with the monasteries; in whose dissolution the convents of females should participate, and for the same reasons. The doctrine of transubstantiation leads to idolatry; but would be wisely discarded, if the language of the Evangelical Doctor, in his Trialogus, were duly considered. The practice of exorcising, and the customs relating to consecrations, savour more of necromancy, than of divinity; and in every kingdom the worldly offices of

Petition of the Lollards.

churchmen are the occasion of disorder, requiring them to attempt that service of God and mammon, which the scriptures declare to be impossible. If prayer for the dead be offered, let it be for the departed in general, and not for individuals; it might then proceed from charity, and be acceptable to God, it is now the work of the hireling, and therefore unavailing. Absolution, and auricular confession, as now practised, are the great stimulants to priestly domination, and often subservient to the schemes of impurity. To be persuaded, indeed, that in the church of England, with the bishop of Rome at her head, there is no little falsehood concealed; it is enough to remember, that no day occurs in which the bliss of heaven might not be purchased for the sum of twelve-pence. Nearly allied also to idolatry, are the pilgrimages performed in favor of images and relics, and the honors commonly yielded to them. The chief tendency of such customs, is assuredly, to continue the people in delusion and ignorance, and to swell the affluence of the indolent among the clergy. On war, the maxims both of priests and laymen are at variance with those contained in the gospel; the pacific character of which is such, that if they allow the slaughter of men at all, they certainly oppose the act of destroying them, with a view to any merely temporal gain; as in wresting distant provinces from the people possessing them, as the punishment of their erroneous faith, or under any such pretence.[11]

[11] Wilkins. Con. iii. 221. Mr. Lewis has printed a copy of this petition, taken from the Selden MSS. It differs in the last article from that inserted in the Acts and Monuments which was taken from the bishops' register, i. 662—664.

CHAP. IX.

"Such is the substance of the petition to which the disciples of Wycliffe were concerned to direct the attention of the english parliament in 1395. The boldness with which its doctrines were avowed, and the rank of many who were known to have embraced them, created no small alarm among the clergy. The king was at this time in Ireland, but messengers were instantly dispatched to lay before him the danger to which the church was exposed, and to urge his immediate return to counteract the machinations of her enemies. Richard obeyed their call, and Lewis Clifford, John Latimer, Richard Sturry, and John Montague, are among the knights, who as having dared to favor the prayer of the obnoxious petition were severely reprimanded by the sovereign.[12]

Tidings of their presumption soon reached the vatican, and called forth an inflammatory letter from Boniface the ninth, addressed to the english monarch. The pontiff commences by expressing his deep sorrow, in common with that of Christendom, that heresy should so far have infected the english people, and that through the negligence of the established authorities, it should still be found increasing, numbering among its abettors, men of learning, a multitude of the common people, and many who not only ventured to preach doctrines subversive, both of the civil and ecclesiastical state, and to commit them to writing, but to affirm them obstinately in the presence of the parliament. The archbishops and bishops of England, are accordingly admonished, that their guilty

[12] Wals. Hist. 351.

sloth must be no longer indulged, but that their utmost efforts must be made, to "root out and de-"stroy" all such as refuse to abandon the snare of Satan. The king is also exhorted to employ his authority and to secure to the clergy the assistance of all magistrates, that every offender persisting in his wickedness, may be banished, or securely imprisoned, until sentenced in due form, to undergo his merited punishment.

This appeal of Boniface to his "sweet son," would not, perhaps, have been made in vain, had not the disorders of the kingdom been such, as to prevent the easy performance of the services required. With respect to the english clergy, the reader must have noticed the frequency with which the pontiffs accused them of indifference to the progress of heresy; and he must also be aware, that the parties accused, were far from deserving the reproach thus cast upon them. Thus the primate Courtney, while Boniface is complaining of his sloth in the hallowed work of persecution, was in fact prosecuting it to the utmost of his power.[13]

Accession of the house of Lancaster

But thus the affairs of the church, and of the lollards, continued until the english sceptre was wrested from the grasp of Richard of Bourdeaux, by Henry of Lancaster. On the accession of the latter, as Henry the fourth, the hopes of the reformers were considerably raised; but they were soon to learn that the son of John of Gaunt, had failed to inherit the sentiments of his father in relation to the church, or that he had imbibed

[13] Fox. Act. i. 657, 658, 659.

CHAP. IX.

them so feebly, as to admit of their being easily sacrificed to political purposes. Thomas Arundel, who succeeded Courtney in the primacy, had been previously translated from Ely to York, and had filled the office of chancellor. In a parliament convened about two years before the deposing of Richard, the new primate was impeached of treason, and was sentenced to forfeit his temporalities, and to leave the kingdom for ever. But he returned in the train of Henry, and placing the crown on the brow of the new monarch, became a party to the bad faith, through which his patron had passed to the possession of his dignity. The king was soon made sensible that the lollards constituted the only peace-offering that could secure him the cordial support of the clergy, and his policy appears to have at once suggested, that it became not the possessor of an ascendancy so doubtfully acquired, to neglect the known wishes of a body having at command so large a portion, both of the wealth, and the authority of the land. Hence, "immediately on his accession, Henry "proclaimed himself the protector of the church "against the assaults of the lollards. In the first "convocation held during his reign, his intentions "were made known to the clergy by a royal "messenger; at the opening of the second, the "king's commissioners, the earl of Northumber-"land, and Erpringham, the lord Chamberlain, "exhorted the prelates and proctors to take "measures for the suppression of the errors dis-"seminated by the itinerant preachers, and pro-"mised them the royal favor and assistance in

"the pursuit of so necessary an object."[14] A similar announcement was at the same time made to the parliament, and encouraged by these favorable appearances, the clergy presented a petition to that assembly and to the king, which led to the enactment of the infamous statute for the burning of heretics.

State heretics cumburiendo.

This instrument commences with preferring the usual complaints respecting persons preaching without the licence of the proper authorities, possessing heretical books, convening unlawful assemblies, and in many ways diffusing the most pestilent opinions. Against these disorders it is provided, that no man shall hereafter attempt the work of religious instruction except duly authorized; that within forty days all books containing doctrines opposed to the determinations of the church, shall be delivered to the ecclesiastical officers; and that all persons convicted of offending in these particulars, or of joining prohibited meetings, or of any way favoring them, shall be committed to the bishop's prison, to be there dealt with at his pleasure, during a space not exceeding three months. If at the expiration of that period, they shall perform their purgation, a fine shall be levied on the property of each culprit according to the nature of his offence, the same to be paid to the king's majesty. But with respect to such as should retain their errors, or abjuring them, should relapse, it was enacted, that the local officers both civil and clerical confer together, "and the sentence being duly pro-

[14] Lingard's Hist. iv. 443, 444.

CHAP. IX.

"nounced, the magistrate shall take into hand the "same persons so offending, and any of them, and "cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all "the people, to the intent that this kind of punish- "may be a terror unto others, that the like wicked "doctrine, and heretical opinions, or the authors "and favourers thereof, be no more maintained "within this realm." It is worthy of notice, also, that the framers of this merciless law, have founded it, not on the common law of Europe, but on the canons of the church, a circumstance which clearly denotes its clerical origin.[15]

Arundel's constitutions.

If any doubt could have existed as to the real parents of this hateful enactment, a series of regulations proposed at the same time by the archbishop of Canterbury, and adopted by a convocation of the clergy, must have served to place the matter beyond suspicion. In introducing these constitutions, which are usually described as those of Thomas Arundel, the primate speaks of the pontiff, as bearing the key of eternal life and death; as filling the place, not of mere humanity, but of the true God; and the guilt of the men who oppose their own judgments to his decisions, is accordingly said to be that of rebellion and sacrilege. Among other complicated enormities, the heretics of the age are charged with the practice of concealing the evil of their purposes, under the appearances of a regard for truth and sanctity; but notwithstanding these pretensions, they are viewed as evidently constituting the tail of the black horse, in the revelations of St. John. In hope,

[15] Rot. Parl. iij. 466. Wilkins. Con. iii. 252.

therefore, of cleansing, not merely the stream, but its source also, it is decreed, that no man shall henceforth venture to preach without the licence of his ordinary; that even such as are thus licensed, shall confine themselves to a statement of those things which are expressly contained in the constitution framed in aid of the ignorance of priests, and beginning *ignorantia sacerdotum*; and that any man persisting in a contempt of these canons, shall forfeit all his possessions, and suffer the other penalties awarded by the statute against heresy. A sentence of interdict is next passed, on every church admitting an heretical teacher; and all schoolmasters are required to abstain from mixing any religious opinions with their province of instruction, and especially to prevent their scholars indulging in expositions of the vernacular scriptures, or in discussions respecting the sacraments of the church. All books written by John Wycliffe, and others of his time; and all hereafter to be written; are to be banished from schools, halls, hospitals, and all places whatsoever; excepting such as may be approved by a council of twelve persons, to be chosen by one or both of the universities. It is also enacted, that no man shall hereafter translate any text of scripture into english upon his own authority; and all who shall be convicted of attempting such translations, or of reading them, shall be punished as favoring error, and heresy. The scriptures being thus disposed of, it is farther resolved, that men shall not presume to dispute on any of the articles determined by holy church, and contained in her decretals, or in her constitutions, whether those of provincial or

CHAP. IX.

of general councils. To question the authority of the said "decretals and constitutions," especially as enjoining pilgrimage to the shrines of saints, and the whole of the accustomed adorations and ceremonies with respect to the cross and images, is certain heresy, and to be punished to the utmost. In the eleventh constitution, the prevalence of Wycliffe's doctrine in the university of Oxford, under the "new and damnable name of lollardie," is deplored; and to cleanse the fountain, once so pure, but from which of late so much poison had proceeded, the strictest inquisition is required to be immediately and constantly made, that all persons suspected of heretical opinions may be prosecuted, according to the canons and the laws before named. Finally, it is determined, that as the crime of heresy is more enormous than treason, since it is a revolt from the authority of the King of kings, all persons suspected of that offence, and refusing to appear before the proper authorities when duly cited, shall, though absent, be adjudged guilty.[16]

These measures both of the government, and of the church, imply the prevalence of Wycliffe's opinions among his countrymen at this period. Our devout martyrologist concludes his notice of these events by observing, "who would have "thought by these laws and constitutions so sub-"stantially founded, so circumspectly provided, "so diligently executed, but that the name and "memory of this persecuted sect should have been "utterly rooted up, and never could have stood?

[16] The reader may see a copy of these constitutions in Fox. i. 683—686.

"And yet, such be the works of the Lord, passing "all man's admiration, that notwithstanding all "this, so far was it off, that the number and "courage of these good men were indeed van-"quished, that they rather multiplied daily, and "increased, especially at London, and Lincoln-"shire, Norfolk, and Herefordshire, in Shrews-"bury, in Calais, and divers other quarters "more."[17]

When the english sceptre passed into the hands of Henry the fifth, and the primacy of the Anglican church was transferred by the death of Arundel, to Henry Chichely, the same measures were resorted to, and the same fate attended them.[18] Many were brought to the stake, and generally on account of rejecting the tenet of transubstantiation; others, were compelled to recant, but a still greater number eluded the search of their persecutors. The mendicants also became vociferous in advocating Wycliffe's doctrine with respect to clerical revenue, though without the mention of his name; and a spirit of violence was frequently manifested against the clergy, which discovered that the effect of the cruelties in which they had indulged, had been rather to confirm the popular aversion to their order, than to extinguish the principles which favored ecclesiastical reform.[19]

[17] Fox. Acts, &c. i. 686, 687.

[18] The latter primate claimed the honour of seeing the bones of Wycliffe consumed. Wilkins. iii. 350.

[19] Fox. i. 661. Turner's Hist. iii. 123—136. The following names occur in Wilkins, as those of persons prosecuted by the clergy on the charge of heresy, during the interval from 1419 to 1428. R. Owtrede, W. Browne, R. Wyche, W. James, W. Taylour, W. Hatton, Fleming, W. Russell, R. Hoke, J. Drayton, S. Richmond, J. Jourdelay, C. Dertford, R. Ruten, W. Harvey, J. Calle, R. Meyngyn, R. Monk, G. Garentur. Concilia, iii. 394—499.

CHAP. IX.

Thus from the register of Lincoln, and so late as the year 1521, it appears that in that diocese alone, more than five hundred persons had been obliged to appear before the bishop, under the charge of offences which bespoke them the disciples of Wycliffe.[20] These, probably, formed but a small portion of those to whom the same delinquencies might with equal justice have been imputed; and it was no doubt a perception of this state of things which led Sir Thomas More to predict the speedy ascendancy of the protestant cause in this country.[21] The nation must have been fully ripe for such a change, when it could be accomplished with so much safety, by a prince possessing so little to endear him to his subjects as Henry the eighth. On many points, the revolution effected by his authority, was but a change of tyrannies; but so far had the hatred of the Roman yoke pervaded the people, that they were no few of them, ready to submit to almost any other in its place. Much light, indeed, was derived at that crisis from Germany, but its efficiency arose from the fact, that it came like the seed which falls on the earth prepared to receive it. All the states of Europe were exposed, more or less, to the action of the same causes, and most of them, from their connexion with the continent in a much greater degree than England; and from the history of such as did, or did not embrace the reformed doctrine, it is plain that this difference is to be traced to the existence, or the non-existence, of those pre-disposing causes, which were produced in this kingdom by the

[20] Fox, ii. p. 33.

[21] Cayley's Life of Thomas More, c. ii. p. 77.

labours of Wycliffe. The council of Constance, and the clergy of Christendom, regarded him as having formed the character of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Both were bold, in avowing their reverence for the character of our reformer, and their approbation of his general doctrine, and both proved themselves disciples worthy of such a master.[22] By their instrumentality, together with that of Zisca, many of the learned and the opulent, and a multitude from that class of society where religion connects itself most powerfully with the conscience, were taught to spurn many a usurpation of the pontiffs. Maxims which the church had declared to be true, they renounced as false and injurious; and practices which the same authority had affirmed to be most devout and christian, were rejected as heathenism rendered still more criminal.

But before concluding these observations, it will be proper to devote a few pages to the story of Lord Cobham. In this country, he was for some years, the leading patron of Wycliffe's disciples, and was moreover a sincere adherent to the religious creed of our reformer. His sufferings, will disclose the temper with which the contest was carried on between the lollards, and the priesthood, to the period when the papal power was excluded from these realms. No event could have shewn more decisively, the superior talents, and the unblemished reputation of Lord Cobham, than his continuance in the favor of Henry the

[22] Lenfant. Council of Constance. Mosheim, iii. 409. The university of Prague, in which Huss inculcated the doctrine of Wycliffe, must have been no ordinary establishment, as it is stated by a contemporary that 36,000 Germans forsook it in consequence of the issue of certain disputes between the Nominalists and Realists. Ibid.

CHAP. IX.

fourth, notwithstanding his known attachment to principles which required the most complete reformation of the church, or rather of the clergy.[23] But in 1413, Henry of Lancaster, was no more; and as the young prince of Wales had hitherto passed his time in the lowest company, and in the most licentious pursuits, the change was thought to be pregnant with danger to the ecclesiastical state. That prince, however, was no sooner called to the throne than his former associates, and his former habits were alike abandoned. Well it would have been, had he possessed at this moment, some more humane counsellors than were those to whom the royal conscience was surrendered. From having betrayed an unusual contempt for the institutions, and the morals of society, he became the zealous advocate of the established religion, with all its follies and corruptions.

At this period, Lord Cobham was exposed to the special resentment of the clergy, not only as having more than once abetted the most obnoxious tenets of lollardism in the english parliament, but as having long maintained numerous preachers of that sect.[24] These are described as having made the provinces subject to the jurisdiction of his grace of Canterbury, and those owning the authority of their lordships of Hereford, Rochester, and London, the principal scene of their itinerant labours. In addition to which, the wealth of this distinguished offender had been freely expended,

[23] In 1407, Henry embarked a considerable force to aid the Duke of Burgundy against the Duke of Orleans, and the name of Lord Cobham occurs as second in command.

[24] The steps of the prosecution, which issued in Lord Cobham's condemnation, may be learnt from the documents in Fox, in Rymer, and from the first volume of the State Trials.

to multiply copies of the writings of Wycliffe, and by this means the seeds of disaffection had not only increased in England, but were scattered through Bohemia and other states of the continent. All this too, had been done in contempt of those solemn decrees which had doomed the preachers so encouraged, and the writings thus diffused, to become in every place the fuel of the same fire. Nor had these maxims of intolerance obtained the sanction conferred upon them merely as an instrument of terror. The works of our reformer were diligently sought after, and committed to the flames. Sawtre, a clergyman whose sincere zeal had perhaps outstripped his discernment, and Badby, a mechanic, whose fidelity and heroism would have done honour to the man of any rank, had both perished at the stake, as the penalty of denying the impious dogma of transubstantiation.

It was accordingly determined in a convocation of the clergy, with the primate Arundel at its head, that a prosecution of Lord Cobham, as the leader of the parties who were so obstinately allied in their opposition to the church, should be immediately commenced. But it was wisely suggested, as of importance, that the pleasure of the sovereign should be ascertained before proceeding to act upon this decision, since the offender, in addition to his rank, was certainly respected by the court, and near the person of the king. A deputation was in consequence appointed to wait upon the monarch, and having exposed in the royal presence the peculiar guilt of the accused, it was urged as strictly necessary, if the piety or the

CHAP. IX.

recognized institutions of the land were to be preserved, that some signal penalty should be speedily inflicted. Henry expressed his disapprobation of the opinions, and of the conduct, imputed to lord Cobham; but requested the suspension of all proceedings until he should have reasoned with him, adding, that should this milder effort be without effect, the punishment of the culprit must be left to the wisdom of the church. The knight listened to his sovereign with reverence, and, in the language of archbishop Wake, returned the following "respectful" answer: "I am, as I have always "been, most willing to obey your majesty as the "minister of God, appointed to bear the sword of "justice, for the punishment of evil doers, and "the protection of those who do well. To you, "therefore, next to my eternal living Judge, I "owe my whole obedience, and entirely submit "as I have ever done, to your pleasure, my life "and all my fortune in this world, and in all "affairs of it whatever, am ready to perform "exactly your royal commands. But as to the "pope and the spiritual dominion which he claims, "I owe him no services, that I know of, nor will "I pay him any; for as sure as God's word is "true, to me it is fully evident that he is the great "antichrist, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in "the holy place."[2] Henry was sorely displeased that neither his arguments, nor his condescension, could bring his faithful soldier to avow a return to orthodoxy; and, abandoned by the king, Lord

[2] State of the Church, ubi supra.

Cobham was left to contend alone with the united strength of his clerical adversaries. CHAP. IX.

His home at this period was Cowley Castle, once the residence of his father-in-law, and situate about three miles from Rochester. The usual steps were taken by the clergy to induce his appearance before them, but in vain; and it was resolved to solicit the assistance of the secular arm to secure his apprehension, as "the seditious "apostate, schismatic, and heretic, the troubler "of the public peace, the enemy of the realm, "the great adversary of all holy church." The persecuted knight now made a second appeal to the justice of his sovereign; but from the royal presence, the ecclesiastical officers were allowed to conduct him to the Tower. After some days, he was brought before the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops of London and Winchester, in the chapter house of St. Paul's. Arundel reminded the prisoner of the sentence, which as primate, he had been recently called to pass upon him; at the same time, informing him, that the absolution which had been hitherto despised, might still be obtained on proper submission. But it was requested by the accused, that as he had no wish to protract enquiry, and as his opinions were certainly unalterable, he might be allowed to read from a document in his hand, the sentiments which he entertained in relation to the articles on which he presumed himself to be suspected of error. This paper referred chiefly to the doctrine of the eucharist, to the nature of penance, the worship of images, and the custom of pilgrimage, and was with some additional expla-

CHAP. IX.

nations a copy of that which he had recently presented to the king. On all the points named, both the sentiment, and language of this confession, were in substance those of Wycliffe. By the prelates, it was considered as in some respects orthodox, in others as requiring farther explanation; and there were moreover several points unnoticed in that statement, on which his opinions must be known. But it was avowed by the prisoner as his determination, to communicate no more than the document before them contained. "You see me in "your power, and do with me as you please," was his simple and decisive language. Arundel was perplexed by this conduct, but presently admonished him, that the faith of christians was a matter which had been placed beyond controversy by the authority of the church; and that on the following Monday, more explicit answers would be expected from him. The archbishop also informed him, that to aid his mind in the interval, care should be taken to make him acquainted with the judgment of the church on the questions at issue. On the morrow, a paper was received by Lord Cobham, which affirmed in the grossest terms, and in the name of the church, the necessity of confession to a priest, the merit of pilgrimages, the propriety of the worship rendered to images, and holy relics, also the supremacy of the pope, and the mysteries of transubstantiation.

On the day appointed, he appeared before a formidable array of judges in the monastery of the Dominicans, near Ludgate. Beside the prelates, the doctors, and the heads of religious houses, included in this assembly, was "a great

"sort more, of priests, monks, canons, friars, "parish clerks, bell-ringers, and pardoners." These are described as treating the "horrible heretic "with innumerable mocks and scorns."[26] With these, also, were others, who were addressed by the prisoner as the people, being the laity who were witnesses of the proceedings. The archbishop commenced by adverting to the absolution which he had so gently proffered in several instances, and which had been contemned, but which he was nevertheless prepared even yet to bestow, should it be sought in "due form and "manner, as holy church hath ordained." To this it was replied, that the judgment of men is frequently opposed to that of their Maker; and as the accused had never wronged the archbishop of Canterbury, it was not from him, that he was concerned to obtain forgiveness. While uttering these sentiments, he became deeply affected, and bending his knee to the earth, he raised his hands toward heaven, exclaiming solemnly, "I confess myself here unto thee, my "eternal, living God, that in my frail youth, I "offended thee, oh Lord! most grievously, in "pride, wrath, and gluttony, in covetousness, and "in lechery. Many men have I injured in mine "anger, and done many other horrible sins, good "Lord, of thee, I ask mercy." Rising from the posture, suited to this act of devotion, the tear fell from his eye, as he glanced on the people who were spectators of his injuries, and with an impassioned utterrance he delivered his prophetic

[26] Fox. Acts, &c. &c.

CHAP. IX.

warning, "Lo! good people, lo!—for the breaking "of God's law and commandments, these men "never yet cursed me. But for the sake of their "own laws and traditions, most cruelly do they "handle both me and other men. Both they, "therefore, and their laws, according to the "promise of God, shall be utterly destroyed." It may be credited, that the firmness of his adversaries was in some measure disturbed by this burst of feeling and intrepidity. A lengthened discussion now took place, and one to which the archbishop, the doctors, and the leaders of the religious brought all their learning, their acuteness, and their passions, each uttering his spontaneous inquiries with a view to ensnare and overpower their victim. Pressed to answer distinctly, whether the bread remained in the sacrament of the altar, after the words of consecration, were pronounced, his reply was an affirmative; and a smile then passed over the countenance of his opponents, as they concluded, "the people "would now judge him to be taken in a great "heresy." Still pressed with inquiries on this subject, and on the authority of the church, he remarks, "My belief is, as I said before, that all "the scriptures of the sacred book are true. All "that is grounded upon them, I believe tho-"roughly, for I know it is God's pleasure that I "should do so. But in your lordly laws, and "idle determinations, have I no belief. For ye "are no part of Christ's holy church, as your open "deeds do shew; but ye are very antichrists, "obstinately set against his holy law and will. The "laws which ye have made, are nothing to his

"glory, but wholly to your own vain-glory, and "covetousness." It is not surprising, that such assertions should be loudly denounced as "exceeding heresy." Thomas Walden, the Carmelite, and a well known antagonist of Wycliffe, observed, that to affirm of any person, and especially of superiors, that they are no part of holy church, must be presumption according to the maxim, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." But it was retorted, "Christ said also in the self-"same chapter of Matthew, that like as the evil "tree is known by its fruits, so is a false prophet "by his works, but that text ye left behind ye." To this and similar quotations of scripture, it is replied by the same disputant, "Ye make here "no difference of judgments, between the evil "judgments which Christ hath forbidden, and "the good judgments which he hath commanded. "Rash judgment, and right judgment, all is one "with you. Such swift judges ever are these "learned scholars of Wycliffe." The Carmelite had now touched a chord to which the bosom of the prisoner could not but respond. "Well, in-"deed," he said, "have ye sophistered. Pre-"posterous evermore are *your* judgments. For "as the prophet Isaiah saith, ye judge evil "good, and good evil, and therefore the same "prophet concludeth, that your ways are not "God's ways. And as for that virtuous man "Wycliffe, before God and man, I here profess, "that until I knew him and his doctrine, that "ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; "but since I have learnt from him to fear my "God, I trust it has been otherwise with me.

CHAP. IX.

"So much grace could I never find in all your "glorious instructions." The friar became indignant, and remarked, "It were not well with "me that in an age so supplied with teachers and "examples, I should find no grace to amend my "life until I heard the devil preach." This, in return, is said to be precisely the temper which led the pharisees to impute the doctrine and miracles of Christ, to the agency of Beelzebub; and to be a part of the evil, entailed on the church, from the day in which she received the "venom "of Judas." The archbishop enquired what that venom meant, and the answer was, "Your "possessions and lordships." These things are said to have made "Rome the very nest of anti-"christ, out of which come all the disciples of "antichrist, of whom prelates, priests, and monks, "are the body, and these friars, the tail. Priests "and deacons, for the preaching of God's word, "and the administering of sacraments, with pro-"vision for the poor, are indeed grounded on "God's law, but these other sects have no manner "of support thence as far as I have read." It now became painfully evident, that nothing but evil could arise from protracting this discussion; and the archbishop hastened to admonish the prisoner that the day waned; that much forbearance had been shewn to him in vain; and that his escape from the most serious penalties could be secured, but by implicitly submitting to the authority of the church. The only effect of these appeals, was an avowal of unaltered sentiment, and a repetition of the words, "Do with me as you will." The archbishop then rose, the clergy and the

laity stood uncovered, and sentence was pronounced on "Sir John Oldcastle, knight, and "lord of Cobham, as a most pernicious and destes-"table heretic;" a sentence which also prohibited any man from rendering him either "counsel or "help," on pain of incurring the censures denounced against the favorers of heretics; and it was farther arranged, that this decree should be published in the mother tongue from the pulpits of every diocese within the province of Canterbury. When the primate had pronounced the anathema of the court, lord Cobham, with a composed aspect, and a firm utterance, remarked, that he knew that sentence could affect the body only, adding, that with regard to the soul, he doubted not, but "He who created that, would of his infinite "mercy and promise save it." His eyes were then turned towards the people who had listened to his doom, but it was to exercise, and not to solicit pity. With an impassioned voice, he bid them beware of the men before him, if they would avoid the fate of the blind who follow the footsteps of the blind; and the few moments which preceded his being re-conducted to the Tower, were spent in entreating the divine forgiveness of his persecutors.

In this proceeding the passions of the clergy appear to have hurried them much beyond their discretion. No avowal of heretical opinions could be more decided, or more notorious, than was that of lord Cobham, and yet a considerable interval passed and the sentence of the law remained unexecuted. At length, whether by connivance, or by his own ingenuity, the prisoner escaped from the Tower;

CHAP. IX. and embarking under the cover of the night found an asylum on the shores of the principality.

His trial had taken place some days before the close of September, and on the night of the seventh of January, an event transpired, which has proved a fruitful theme of misrepresentation and calumny. Of the Romanist historians, who were contemporaries, or more nearly contemporary with the occurrence, there is no one, who in describing it, is not materially at issue with himself, and with his brethren.

Walsingham is noticed by Mr. Sharon Turner as "the bitterest enemy of the reformers," and in consequence as stating this transaction "most "favorably to the king and his party." I know not that I can do better than submit to the candour of the reader, the substance of Walsingham's *ex-parte* statements, as given by our more dispassionate historian. "Reports," he observes, "were "spread, that the lollards were plotting to de- "stroy the king and his brothers at Eltham. In- "formed of the design, the king went to his "palace at Westminster, to be safer from its pub- "licity. He was then told, that they were as- "sembling from all quarters into a field near "St. Giles's, to act under their leader, Oldcastle, "at a fixed day and hour. The king, at night, "ordered his friends to arm, and then *first* "mentioned what he resolved to do. He was ad- "vised to wait until day-break, that they might "discern who were willing to act with him, or "against him, and was advised by others to "wait, till he got an army together if a for- "midable body was to be met. He listened to

"neither, because he *had heard* that the lollards "intended to burn Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, "St. Alban's, and all the other friaries in London. "He went, therefore, to St. Giles's in the middle "of the night, anticipating the projected move- "ments of the ensuing day. He found only a few "persons there, who being asked what they "wanted, said, the lord Cobham. They were "seized and imprisoned. They were surprised "to find, that *no one* came from London to join "them. The king had ordered all the city gates "to be shut, and guarded; and if he had not taken "this precaution, *there would have come*, ('prout "fertur,') *as it was reported*, fifty thousand servants "and apprentices against the king."[27]

[27] Hist. ii. 452, 453. Nor has the credulity of Walsingham died with him. These disciples of Wycliffe are still described, as conducted at one time by their notions of private judgment, into all that discordant variety of opinion which has been the common punishment of such presumption; while at another they are so organized, that at some secret bidding 20,000 can be suddenly put in motion, and all without knowing why. To-day they are such "a compound of fanaticism and folly" as to complain of the clergy to the parliament, because they "authorize war and crimi- "nal executions, which are contrary to the law of Christ, a law of mercy "and love; and because they permit men to exercise the trade of gold- "smith and sword cutler, which are unnecessary and pernicious under the "dispensation of the gospel," and to-morrow they beard the government by stating that "if the authority of the crown should be employed in op- "position to their doctrine they are able to assemble 100,000 men ready "*to draw the sword in its defence.*" But such is the thread of contradic- tion, which the care of Providence has commonly interwoven with the stories of oppression. See Dr. Lingard's Hist. iv. 443. 319. 324. v. 3—6. Fox has brought his learning and ingenuity to the investigation of the charge of treason as preferred against Sir John Oldcastle, by Harpsfield. Acts and Monuments, i. 740—772. The shape which the controversy between the lollards and the orthodox assumed at a later period, the reader may learn from Mr. Lewis's Life of Peacocke, a book which he will find much more readable, than the Life of Wiclif by the same author.

CHAP. IX.

Such, reader, is the clumsy tale related by Walsingham, on this subject, who is nevertheless the best authority to be adduced on this matter by the enemies of the lollards. Mr. Turner's observations on the passage are as follows. "On "this account we may remark, that it is a series "of supposition, rumour, private information, "apprehension, and anticipation. That the king "was acted upon by some secret agents is clear, "that the plots asserted, were really formed, "there is no evidence. The probability is, that "Henry's generous and lofty mind was found "to start at the violences which the bigotry of "the papal clergy had resolved upon, and that "artful measures were taken to alarm it into anger "and cruelty by charges of treason, rebellion, and "meditated assassination."[28]

It was important to render the lollards odious, both to the government and to the nation, before proceeding to those desperate measures which afforded the only hope of subduing them; and by this artifice, stale as it was in all its parts, the end proposed was too nearly obtained. An act was now passed, which identified heresy with

[28] Hist. ii. 453. Such also is the judgment of Rapin. It is to the men who have most corrupted Christianity, and to those who treat it as a lie, that the rumours opposed to the reputation of the christian reformers have always been most acceptable. By this holy alliance much has been done, and is still doing, to put down the religion of the gospels. A comparison of the pages of David Hume, and those of our contemporary Dr. Lingard, as far as they relate to the character of Sir John Oldcastle, will confirm this assertion. The same will apply also to their accounts of Wycliffe. But I cannot forbear to remark, that the censure considered due to such writers, is feeble, when compared with that which is merited by the Milners. (Church History, Art. Wickliffe.) Their querelous abuse of our reformer must occur to every candid man as strangely childish and contradictory.

treason; and lord Cobham, who was apprehended about three years later, was sentenced to die, according to the penalties of this frightful statute. At the place of execution, he renewed his exhortations to the people to follow their priests, but as their life and doctrine should be conformable to the word of God. The proffered service of a confessor, he rejected, affirming that the duty of confession was one to be performed to God only; and while the surrounding clergy warned the spectators against praying for the sufferer, because evidently condemned of heaven, the object of their enmity, in the spirit of a better faith, was heard to pray aloud for the salvation of his persecutors. To be hung in chains, as a traitor; and at the same time, slowly consumed to ashes as a heretic, was the appaling sentence pronounced on Sir John Oldcastle. And thus he perished, attributing the formation of his religious character, to the labours of Wycliffe, evincing a spirit of fortitude which none of his adversaries could have surpassed, and a generosity of temper which formed no part of their nature.[29]

The men who knew the innocence and the worth of this illustrious sufferer, would reflect on this deed of blood, and become more confirmed in their abhorrence of the usurpation from which

[29] Rot. Parl. 107—110. State Trials, i. 50. Stowe, 335. Holin. 561. Hall, 58. Godwin's Henry V. Walsingham states that his defence before the parliament was a lecture on the duty of forgiveness, and that he concluded by asserting his allegiance to Richard, whom he declared to be alive in Scotland. It is highly probable that the opportunity of reiterating his doctrines before that assembly would not be unimproved, and that he should avow himself a traitor in the hope of escaping the penalties of treason, would hardly occur as a difficulty to the genius of Walsingham.

CHAP. IX.

it had proceeded. Their children, too, would be taught to imbibe a deeper, and a holier hatred, of that worldly hierarchy which could descend to such atrocities to preserve its power. We may remark, also, that in England, the principles of the reformation had never been peculiar to the mind of the poor; and that from this period, to perish in their cause, was to become allied to the privileged and the noble. Nor would it be proper to conclude a work of this description, without reminding the reader, that if the corruption of christianity has proceeded to so painful an extent from the unfaithfulness of its accredited ministers, it is to the same order of men that we are chiefly indebted for the restoration of its purity. Let it never be forgotten, that in its earlier history, it was announced to the world by men in whose character, its better tendencies were all beautifully exhibited; and that if that apostacy of which Rome has long been the centre, arose from the lust and perfidy of priests, it is with that class of men that we must associate the names of Wycliffe, and Latimer, Luther, and Melancthon, Zuingluis, and Knox. If it was reserved to the evil passions of that order to impose on men the heaviest yoke, that has oppressed them; to the generosity, and enterprise of priests, the noblest deliverance achieved for human nature must be mainly attributed. In these later times, there are quarters, in which if priestcraft has slain its thousands, laycraft had slain its tens of thousands.

From the eighth century to the sixteenth, the principles of the protestant reformation were all really advancing, notwithstanding the retrogade

appearance of things at certain intervals. The stand made by the Paulicians, was surpassed by that of the Waldenses. By the labours of Wycliffe, a still more sensible movement toward the renovation of Christendom was effected; and a man needed not the spirit of prophecy to anticipate the rise of Zuinglius and Luther, from the ashes of Huss and Jerome. Each swell in the coming tide, retreated apparently quite to the point from which it had commenced, but each was more powerful than the former, and bespoke the certain influx of the mighty waters.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE

WRITINGS OF JOHN WYCLIFFE, D. D.

CHAP. X.

THE writings of Wycliffe are most of them well known, from the notices which occur in the numerous documents relating to the measures which were designed to suppress them. Where this kind of evidence fails; their contents, and the freedom with which certain parts of any popular treatise were repeated in others, affords the necessary aid. Such pieces as have been improperly attributed to him, and such as rest on suspicious evidence, are placed together, and noticed accordingly. It was affirmed by an english prelate, soon after the decease of Wycliffe, that his works were quite as voluminous, as those of Augustine.[1] A similar statement was made, and as the result of personally inspecting them, by the learned Henry Warton.[2] Accordingly we find that in Bohemia, they were so numerous, that more than two hundred volumes, many of them richly decorated, were committed to the flames by Subinco Lepus, bishop of Prague. Among these,

[1] Cochleus. Hist. Huss. lib. i. [2] Antho. Har. Specimen, &c. 16.

was the reformer's Exposition of the Decalogue, a copy of his Homilies, and the Trialogus.[3] In this kingdom, whatever could be done to effect the destruction of these pestilent productions was attempted; and it demonstrates at once the folly of persecution, and the hold which the doctrine of the rector of Lutterworth, had acquired on the mind of his countrymen, that at least three-fourths of his pieces should be still extant. Those also which are lost, appear to have been chiefly scholastic tracts, of little value when compared with his works which are preserved. Hence, when Henry the eighth meditated rejecting the supremacy of the pope, and wished to be informed respecting the doctrine of Wycliffe on that subject, even the University of Oxford could supply him with ample information. It was of a kind too, which proved highly grateful to the royal theologian.

SECTION I.

HIS PRINTED WORKS.

1. *Translation of the New Testament*, printed first by the Rev. John Lewis, Minister of Margate, in the county of Kent, in the year 1731; and again in the year 1810, by the Rev. Henry Hervey Baber, an Assistant Librarian of the British Museum. The last editor remarks, that "the text of Mr. "Lewis's edition was taken from two manuscripts, one of "which was his own, and the other the property of Sir "Edward Dering, Bart., of Surrenden-dering, in Kent. "From the former, he transcribed for the press the Four

[3] Hist. Bohem. apud. Fasciculum, i. 297. Fox. Acts, &c. Lewis, c. ix.

CHAP. X.

"Gospels; from the latter, the Epistles, the Dedis of Apostlis, "and the Apocalips. The transcript was collated by the "learned Dr. Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalen "College, Cambridge, with ten manuscripts deposited in "different Libraries at Cambridge; and afterwards compared "by Mr. Lewis, with specimens purposely selected of six "of the most curious manuscripts in the University of Oxford." Of that edition, Mr. Baber's is a reprint.

2. *Trialogorum.* This work was printed in 1525. Its title, is as follows: Jo Wiclefi viri undiquaque piissimi, dialogorum libri quatuor quorum primus divinitatem et ideas tractat; secundus universarum creationenem complectitur: tertius de virtutibus vitiisque contrariis copiosissime loquitur: quartus Romanæ Ecclesiæ sacramenta, ejus pestiferam dotationem, Antichristi regnum, fratrum fraudulentam originem atque eorum hypocrisim variaque nostro ævo scitu dignissima graphice perstringit, quæ ut essent inventu facilia, singulorum librorum tum caput, tum capitis summam indice pernotavimus. M.D. XXV. 4to. The volume is without the name of printer or place. It is said to have been printed by Oporin at Bazil; and on other grounds, it has been attributed to Valentia Kob. See Baber's Memoirs of Wiclif, p. 50, and chap. vii. of this volume. There are copies of this work in the Libraries of Trinity College Cambridge, of the Cathedral at York, and of Lambeth palace. They are also to be found, though very rarely, in private collections.

The following statement of the contents of the several chapters of the Trialogus, will farther assist the reader in judging of that work.

LIBRI PRIMI.

Deus sit omnium rerum prima caussa. Deus est supra omne genus. De triplici suppositione. Quomodo deus est quicquid melius est esse que non esse. De passionibus et proprietatibus dei. Quod deus sit trinus. De naturali demonstratione triuitatis. De Idæis. De inuentore Idæarum; et quæ res habent Idæas. De intelligentia dei. De limitibus Idæarum.

LIBRI SECUNDI.

De universitate creata. De triplici mensura æternitatis. De compositione rerum et creatione. De materiæ primæ quidditate et eius pluralitate. De anima intellectiua et suis potentiis. De anathomia cerebri et suis huoribus. De sensationibus. Si immortalitas spiritus ratione deduci possit. De potentiis intellectus hominis. De Angelis. De diuersorum angelorum diuersoiudicio. De angelorum lapsu et eorum pœna. De pugna angelorum. De prædestinatione et præscientia Dei, et erorum caussis. De cœlo et suis partibus.

LIBRI TERTII.

De uirtutibus. Quot uirtutes sunt in intellectu et uoluntate. De spe. De peccato. Quomodo peccatum ueniale et mortale distinguuntur. Penes quid attentatur peccati grauitas. De gratia. Omnia eueniunt necessitate absoluta. De septem peccatis mortalibus. De superbia. De humilitate. De inuidia. De charitate. De Ira. De patientia et militate. De Accidia, quæ medium tenet inter septem peccata mortalia. De uirtute Accidiæ opposita. De Auaritia. De uirtute opposita Auaritiæ. De Gula. De uirtute opposita Gulæ. De Luxuria. De Castilate. De pronitate hoim ad peccandum. De incarnatione et morte Christi. De originali peccato. De incarnatione, quomodo deus potuit incarnari. De numero saluandorum. Quomodo Christus excedit ordines Angelorum, et hominum. Quomodo nullus sanctorum est laudandus, nisi quia Christem est imitatus. Quomodo lex Christii in infinitum excedit alias leges.

LIBRI QUARTI.

De Signis De Eucharistia. Quid demonstretur per ly hoc. Quod post consecrationem manet panis. Probantur iam dicta superuis rationibus. Quomodo et qua caussa inoleuit hæresis circa Eucharî sliæ sacramentum. Quomodo panis est corpus domino, non existens identi ce corpus ipsum. De identificatione panis cum corpore Christi. Qd' corpus Christi non putrefit. Si duo corpora possunt esse in eodem loco. De Baptismo. De triplici Baptismo. De pœnis infantum sine peccato actuali decedentium. De confirmatione. De sacramento ordinis. Huius sacramenti confirmatio. De auaritia cleri. Sæculares propter. dotationem sunt puniendi. De Matrimonio. Quid sit Matrimonium. De caussa libelli repudii. Cum quibus uerbis uel signis Matrimonium celebrari debet. De pœnitentia. In quo signo possumus capareueram contritionem. De extrema on etione. De speciebus ministrorum. Quod fratres commiuis center hæresim in ecclesia. De mendicatione fratrum. Quod mendicatio fratrum est infundabilis in scriptura. De literis fraternitatum. Quomodo fratres false uendunt sua merita et orationes. De indulgentiis. Quomodo ordines fratrum sunt introducti. In quo freres legi Christi contrarii. De uariis fratum abusibus. Quo-

CHAP. X. modo fratres seducunt regna que incolunt. De fratrum fraude at que malicia. An domini temporales debent et possunt populares, inuare et defendere contra fratres. De statu hominis quem consequiter post hanc vitam. De ultimo iudicio, quare, et ubi, et quando erit. De dotibus corporum beatorum. De dotibus animæ. De pœnis damnatorum. De sensibus bonorum interioribus et exterioribus.

3. *Ostiolum Wiclefi; or, Wickliffe's Wicket.* This piece has been several times printed. "The first edition," observes Mr. Baber, "was printed at Noremberch, in 1546, 8vo.; "of the second edition, I know no more than what the third "informs me in its title, which is as follows: 'Wickliffe's "Wicket, faythfully ouerseene and corrected after the origi- "nal and first copie. The lack whereof was cause of innu- "merable and shamfull erroures in the other edicion. As "shall easily appear to them that lyste to conferre the one "with the other. Ouerseene by M. C.' It is a 16mo. without "date, place, or printer's name; and the language of it "is accommodated to that of the time in which the book was "printed. The last edition appeared in 1612, printed at "Oxford, in 8vo., and was edited by the learned Henry Jack- "son, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A copy of the "first edition of this very rare book is in the Bodleian Library; "of the third, in Lambeth Palace Library; and of the last, in "the British Museum." For an analysis of this treatise, see c. iii. of this volume, pp. 84—88.[1]

4. *Ad Regem & Parliamentum.* A latin copy of this tract is among the Cotten MSS. in the British Museum; a copy in english is preserved in Benet College, Cambridge; and another in Trinity College, Dublin. It was published by Dr. James, and printed at Oxford, 1608, quarto. For an epitome of this production, see vol. ii. chap. 4, pp. 118—125.

5. *Objections of Freres.* This piece was published by Dr. James in the same volume, with the treatise last noticed, intitled, "Against the orders of the Begging Friars." The volume is scarce, but may be seen in the British Museum, and

[1] These references, whenever they occur, are to the present publication.

in the Bodleian Library. For an account of this treatise, see vol. i. chap. ii., and vol. ii. chap. iii. p. 236.

6. *Determinatio de Dominio.* E. Codd. MSS. Joh. Seldeni, Arch. B. 10. This paper is printed in Mr. Lewis's collection, No. 30. For the substance of it, see vol. i. 268—275.

7. *Ad quæsita Regis et Concilii.* "Dubium est utrum "regnum Angliæ possit ligitime imminente necessitate suæ "defencronis thesaurum regni detinere ne deferatur ad "exterors etiam Domino Papa sub pene censurarum et "virtute obedientiæ hoc petente." In Hyperoo Bodl. 163. This paper may be seen in Fox. i. 584. See vol. i. 343—347.

8. *Conclusiones suæ cum responsione sua.* This document is printed in Walsingham, Hist. 206—208. *Ad parliamentum Regis* is another reply to the same conclusions, and is printed from Lewis's Life of Wycliffe, in the Appendix to the first volume of this work. This tract is noticed as Wycliffe's, by Lord Chief Justice Coke, in the fifth volume of his reports. These papers are in the Selden MSS. (Archi. B. 10.) and also a third, relating to the same series of articles. For the substance of each, see vol. i. chap. 5.

9. *Confessio de Eucharistia.* This is printed by Mr. Lewis, No. 21, and may be seen in the Appendix to this volume, No. 6.

10. *De fide Eucharistiæ.* "Credo ut Christus et Apostoli "docuerunt." An english copy of this confession is in the Appendix to this volume, No. 7, and the substance of it is inserted in chap. 4. 135—137.

11. *Excusationes ad Urbanum.* "Guadeo plane detegere "cuique fidem." An english copy of this letter is in the Cotton Library; and printed in the Appendix to this volume, No. 8.

12. *Pro egentibus Presbyteris,* or "Why poor priests have "no benefices." This tract is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and in C. C. C. Cambridge. It was first printed by Mr. Lewis. See vol. ii. pp. 197—202.

SECTION II.

Including the Wycliffe manuscripts extant in England and Ireland. This series contains nearly forty MSS. preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, the existence of which has been hitherto unknown to the reformer's biographers.

1. *De ultima ætate ecclesiæ.* Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. No. 12. See vol. i. pp. 241—247.

2. *Expositio Decalogi.* This exposition is in the British Museum Cott. MSS. Titus. D. xix. For an analysis of this work, see vol. i. 304—313. In the Bodleian is a more extended Exposition of the Decalogue in Latin. It was minutely consulted by Dr. James, in composing his Apology for John Wicliffe.

3. *The Pore Caitif,* sometimes called *pauper rusticus:* sometimes *confessio derelicti pauperis,* consists of a series of tracts in english, designed for the instruction of the poorer classes of the people, in the elements of the christian religion. It is described by its author as "sufficient to teach simple "men and women of good will, the right way to heaven." The comments on the *apostle's creed,* the *pater-noster,* are followed by pieces with the following titles. *Sweet sentences, exciting men and women to heavenly desire. Virtuous patience. Of temptation. The charter of heaven. Of ghostly battle. The name Jesus. The love of Jesu. The desire of Jesu. Of very meekness. The effect of man's will. Active and contemplative life. The mirror of maidens.* At the conclusion of the last piece in this collection are the words, "Here "endeth this book, that is clepid the Pore Caitif." Copies of this work are in the British Museum, Lambeth Library, and Trinity College, Dublin.

4. *De Veritate Scripturæ.* Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3021. 32. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class. C. Tab. 1. No. 24. See this volume, pp. 7, 8.

5. *De hypocritarum imposturis.* This tract is in english, beginning, "Crist commandith to his disciplis, and to alle "Christen men to understonde and flee the saur dow of Pha- "risees which is yprocrisy." C. C. C. Cambridge, Trin. Coll. Dub. See vol. ii. pp. 233—236. The following pieces also to No. 19, are in the same collections.

6. *De obedientia Prælatorum.* It begins, "Prelates slan- "dren poor priests and other Cristen men, that they will not "obesthe to their Sovereigns," &c. &c. See vol. ii. pp. 215—217.

7. *De clericis possessionariis,* which begins, "Clerkes Pos- "sessioners fordon priesthood, knighthood, and commoners." See vol. ii. pp. 225, 226.

8. *Impedimenta Evangelizantium.* This is the same with the piece described as, "Of feigned contemplatif life," which thus begins: "First, when true men teach by God's law, wit, "and reason, that eche Priest oweth to do his wit, and his will, "to preche Christ's gospel," &c. &c. See vol. ii. pp. 360—362.

9. *Pro amplexando evangelio.* The english title of this piece is, "How religious men should kepe certain Articles;" beginning thus.—"Christen men, preyen meekly and devoutly "to Almighty God, that he grant his grace for his endless "mercy to our religious, both possessioners and mendicants," &c. &c. The articles are numerous, but the notices connected with them are very brief.

10. *How Satanas and his priests, and his feyned Religions, casten by three cursed heresies to destroy all good living and meyntening all manner of sin.* It begins thus.—As "Almighty "God in Trinity, ordeineth men to come to the bliss of heaven "by three grounds," &c. &c. See vol. ii. pp. 217—219.

11. *De nequitiis ejusdem.* This piece in english, has a title, beginning with the words, "How Antichrist and his "Clerks travellen to destroy holy Writ, and to make Cristen "Men unstable in the faith," &c. &c. See vol. ii. pp. 239—242.

12. *Super Testamento Francisci.* Wycliffe's remarks on this testament begins thus—"But here the Menours sayn that "the pope dischargeth them of this testament." The comment

CHAP. X.

is preceded by a translation of the rule of St. Francis, as given by Matthew Paris.

13. *For three skills lords shulden constrain Clerks to live in meekness, wilfull poverty, and discreet penance and ghostly traveile.* It begins thus—"Open teaching of God's law, "old and new, open ensample of Christ's life, and his glorious "Apostles," &c. &c.

14. *De Prelatis et eorum officio.* This is the piece so frequently cited as "Of Prelates;" beginning thus—"Here "it telleth of Prelates, that Prelates leaven preching of the "Gospel, and ben gostly manquellers of men's souls." See vol. ii. pp. 238, 239.

15. *Speculem de Antichristo.* The english copy of this tract professes to describe "How Antichrist and his Clerks "feren true Priests fro preching of Christ's Gospel by four "Deceits." It commences thus—"First, they seyn that "preching of the Gospel maketh dissension and enmity." See vol. ii. pp. 221—223.

16. *De clericorum ordinatione.* The copy of this preserved, is also in english, intitled, "Of the order of priesthood;" beginning—"For the order of priesthood is ordained of God, "both in the old law, and in the new." See vol. ii. pp. 238, 239.

17. *De dominis et servis; or, "Of servants and lords,"* how eche shull kepe his degree; beginning—"First, servants "shullen truly and gladly serve to their lords or masters." See vol. ii. pp. 219, 220.

18. *How Prayer of good Men helpeth much, and Prayer of sinfull Men displeaseth God, and harmeth themselves and other Men;* beginning—"Our Lord Jesu Christ techeth us to "pray evermore for all nedefull things both to body and soul." See vol. ii. pp. 223—225.

19. *De Episcoporum erroribus;* beginning—"There bin "eight things by which simple Christen men ben deceyed." Also, "*De* *** III. *erroribus Curatorium;*" beginning—"For "the office of curates is ordained of God." Of these pieces, the reader may form his judgment from that of prelates, and that for the order of priesthood. See vol. ii. pp. 238, 239.

20. *How Satanas and his children turnen works of mercy upon Sodom and deceyven men therein;* beginning—"First, "Christ commandeth men of power to feed hungry poor men; "the fend and his techen to make costly feasts, and waste "many goods on lords," C. C. C. Cambridge.

21. *A short rule of life for eche man, in general, and for priests, and lords, and labourers in special;* beginning—"First, when thou risest, or fully wakest, think on the good- "ness of thy God, how for his own goodness, and none other "nede, he made all things of nought," C. C. C. Cambridge. This piece is followed by a brief comment on The *Ave Maria*.

22. *Of wedded men and wives;* beginning—"Our Lord "God Almighty, speaketh in his law of tweie matrimonies or "wedlocks," &c. &c. C. C. C. Cambridge. See vol. i. pp. 122, 123.

23. *Of good preching Priests;* beginning—"The first gene- "rál point of poor priests that prechen in England, is this," &c. &c. C. C. C. Cambridge. See vol. ii. pp. 220, 221.

24. *The great Sentence of the Curse Expounded;* beginning—"First, all heretics against the faith of holy writ, ben cursed "solemnly, four times in the year." C. C. C. Cambridge. See vol. ii. pp. 237, 238.

25. *De blasphemia contra fratres;* beginning—"It is seide "that three things stourblin this realme, and specially here- "sie." Bibl. Bodl. Archio. A. 83.

26. *De domino divino,* is a tract of four pages; beginning—"Sith false glossiris maken Goddis law derk, and letten se- "cular men to susteyne, and kepe it, of sich false glossis "schulde each man bewar."

27. *Super oratione dominica;* beginning—"When we seyn "Our Fader that art in heaven, we ben taught."

28. *Ad ducem Glocestriæ contra fraterculem;* beginning—"Most worshipful and gentlest Lord Duke of Gloucester." Trin. Coll. Dub. See vol. ii. p. 157.

29. *De Sathanæ astu contra fidem:* beginning—"The fend "seeketh many ways to mar 'men in belief.'" This tract extends to two pages only.

CHAP. X.

30. *Sermones in Epistolas* and *Sermones in Evangelia*, are the titles of his homilies, or parochial discourses. Copies of these more or less perfect, and some of them beautifully written, are in the manuscript collections of the British Museum, Cambridge, Trinity College, Dublin, and elsewhere. See vol. iii.

31. *Transtrulit in Anglicum sermonem Biblia tota.* Of this memorable work, several copies are extant; as in the British Museum and Lambeth Palace. The costs of transcribing, obliged our ancestors to secure parts of the sacred volume; sometimes including the four gospels; sometimes the epistles of St. Paul; and not unfrequently, still smaller portions. Dr. Whitaker states, (Hist. of Richmondshire, Art. Wycliffe) that the copy of Wycliffe's Bible, in Lambeth Palace, is beautifully illuminated; and suggests that the portrait of Sir Antonio More was probably obtained from such a source. But there is not, nor has there ever been, a manuscript at all of that description in the Lambeth Library. See Appendix, No. 1. and vol. iii. p. ii.

32. *Translatio Clementis Lanthoniensis.* "In the Earl of "Oxford's Library," observes Mr. Lewis, "is a MS. entitled "John Wiclif's Translation of Clement Lanthon's Harmony "of the Gospels, which begins thus"—"Clement, a Preest of "the Chirche of Lanthonth," in 12 parts. Lanthon was an Austin Friar, who flourished in 1154. Leland de Scrip. Brit. 226. There is a copy of this work in the British Museum; Harl. MSS. 1862.

33. *De stidendis ministrorum.* This tract is exant in englisli, intitled, "How men shulden find priests, and beginning—"Think wisely, ye men, that finden prieste, that ye don this "alms for God's love, and help of your soules, and help of "Christen men." C. C. C. Cambridge.

34. *De Ecclesiæ dominio*; in english, "Of the Chirche of "Christ, and of hir Membris, and of hir Governaunce;" beginning thus—"Christis Chirche is his spouse, that hath three "parts," &c. &c. Bib. Reg. 18, B. xiv. It is also in Trin. Coll. Dub. It is frequently cited in the preceding chapters.

35. *In Apocalypsin Johannis.* The exposition is introduced by a prologue, and the former begins with the words—"The "undoyng of Seynt Joon bitokeneth Prelatis of hooli Chirche, "that understondith the wois of the Gospels." Bib. Reg. E. 1732, p. 67.

36. *De vita sacerdotum.* "This peril of Freris is the "last of eight that falles to men in this way." Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3072. See vol. ii.

37. *Speculem secularium dominorum.* Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3849, Bibl. Reg.

38. *De incarnatione Verbi.* Bibl. Reg. E. 270 fol. This piece is in latin; beginning, "Prælibato tractatu De Anima," &c. &c.

39. *De ecclesia catholica*, sometimes called, *De fide catholica*, is a manuscript preserved in the Bodleian, and a copy taken from it by Dr. James, is in the Lambeth Library.

40. *De modo orandi.* On the twelve lettyngis of prayer. Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. Bibl. Bodl.

41. *Epistola ad simplices sacerdotas.* This piece does not reach beyond a page, and may be seen in the British Museum. Bibl. Reg. 17, B. xvii.

42. *De virtutibus, et vitiis.* This treats of religious and moral obligations after the fashion of that age. Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. A production of the same kind, but somewhat different from the former, may be seen. Bibl. Reg. 7, A. xxvi. Like the Pore Caitif, it was evidently designed to present an epitome of religious instructions to the poorer classes.

43. *De sermone domini in monte*, and *Octo beatitudineo*, are different names of the same discourse. From the Reformer's exposition of the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, seventy-four erroneous opinions were extracted. There is a sermon under this name in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. But it must have been his more extended exposition of that chapter which supplied his enemies with such material for accusation. MS. Twini. A. 216. See No. 13, p. 426.

44. *De papâ Romanâ*, or *Schisma Pape.* Mr. Baber states

CHAP. X.

that this tract is in the Bodleian, but it has eluded my search. There is a copy in Trin. Col. Dub. See vol. ii.

45. *De questionibus variis contra clerum.* Lambeth Library, Cot. MSS. 151.

46. In the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a large manuscript volume, including the following pieces; several of which, are known to be those of Wycliffe; as the 10th and 11th which are noticed by Huss; (Lewis, c. ix. 179, Baber,) and of the rest, several are attributed to the reformer in the hand-writing of the transcriber. MS. 326. 8. C. 5. 8.

1. *De ente communi.* In primus supponitur eus esse, pp. 1—5.

2. *De ente primo.* Extensio ente secundum ejus maximam ampliationem; pp. 5—9.

3. *De purgando errores, et veritate in communi.* Consequens est purgare errores, pp. 9—15.

4. *De purgando errores et universalibus in communi.* Tractata Continentur dicta de universalibus, pp. 15—23.

5. *De universalibus.* Tractatus de universalibus continet, 16 capitala cujus primum, pp. 23—37.

6. *De tempore.* In tractando de tempore sunt, &c. &c. pp. 37—47.

7. *De intellectione Dei.* Illorum quæ susunt Deo, &c. &c. pp. 47—53.

8. *De scientia Dei.* Et dictis superius satis liquet, &c. &c. pp. 53—70.

9. *De volitione Dei.* Tractando de volitione Dei quam, &c. &c. pp. 70—91.

10. *De personarum distinctione.* Superest investigare distinctione; &c. &c. pp. 91—115.

11. *De ideis.* Tractando de ydeis primo oportet, &c. &c. pp. 115—122.

12. *De potentia productiva Dei.* Veritatum quas deus, &c. &c. pp. 122—134.

13. *De Sermone Domini.* Licet totum Evangelium, pp. 134—141.

47. In a volume preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, is a series of treatises described as follows: Class C. Tab. I. No. 23.

1. *Tractatus Evangelii de Sermone Domini in monte, cum Expositiores Orationis Dominica. Dividetur in tres Libros.*

2. *Tractatus de Antichristo,* cum Expositorio in 23, 24, 25. Cap, Matthæi.

3. *Tractatus in Sermonem Domini quem facerat valedicendo Discipulio suis.*

4. *Tractatus de Statu Innocentiæ.*

5. *Tractatus de sempore in* 13 *capitulis.*

6. *Expositio quorundum locorum scripturæ S.S. scil, Tit.* ii. 11. *Heb.* i. 1. *et Isaiæ* xxv. 1. There is also an Exposition of 1 Thessalonians iv. 13, and of John xi. 21. But these are merely parts of his homilies. The volume extends to 400 pages; and what is peculiar to this collection of Wycliffe's MSS. it has a copious index.

7. *De Simonia.* Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. I. No. 24.

8. *De Apostasia* is in the same volume. The first piece extends about forty small folio pages; the last to about half that number. Another volume in the same Library, contains a MS. intitled, "*Of Apostacy and the possessions of Clerks.*" This volume farther contains the following tracts. *Of Pseudo Friars. Of the eight woes which God wished to Friars. Of Antichrist and his ways. Of Antichrist's song in the church. A treatise of prayer. A treatise on confession. A tract of Christian obedience*; beginning—"Christ forsooth did all that "he could to obey to lords." In the volume, there are several separate homilies, meditations on various subjects, and a short treatise, beginning—"How are questions and answers "put that are written hereafter." The collection forms a duodecimo volume of about 400 pages, written with a very small but legible character. Class C. Tab. V. No. 6.

48. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Bibl. Bodl. See vol. ii. pp. 243—247.

CHAP. X.

SECTION III.

The following pieces are in the Imperial Library of Vienna; the catalogue of which may be seen in the British Museum.

De minoribus Fratribus se extollentibus. De Sectis Monachorum. De quatuor sectis novellis. De fundatione sectarum. De Solutione Sathanæ. De Dæmonio meridiano. Responsiones ad xiv. *argumenta Radulphi Strodi. Litera parva ad quendam Socium. Speculem militantis ecclesiæ. De oratione et ecclesiæ purgatione. De gradibus cleri. De graduationibus. De duobus generibus hereticorum. De quatuor interpretationibus. Super impositis articulis, and Socii argumentum contra veritatem.*[1] *De citationibus frivolis et aliis versutiis Antichristi. De juramento Arnoldi (de Grannario) collectoris Papæ. De sex jugis. De exhortatione novi Doctoris. De ordine Christiano.*[2] *De vaticinatione. Dialogus inter veritatem et mendacium. Epistola, de peccato in Spiritum Sanctum. Litera parva ad quendam Socium. Litera ad Episcopium Lincoln. de amore, sive de quintuplice quæstione. Epistola ad Archiepiscoprum Cantuar. De Eucharistiâ et pœnitentiâ. De octo quæstionibus propositis discipulo. De triplici vinculo amoris.*

---

[1] This is supposed to have been the exercise performed previous to obtaining his degree of doctor in divinity.

[2] Twelve conclusions opposed to the claims of the pontiffs, were censured as taught in this tract, MS. Twini. A. 218.

SECTION IV.

The following are the titles of pieces which are known only by these names. Many were on the questions of science, and others were probably different designations of the same tracts.

Quæstiones logicales. Logica de singulis. Logica de aggregatis. De propositionibus. De insolubilibus. De exclusivis et exceptivis. De causabilus. De comparativis. De conditionalibus. De disjunctivis. Grammaticæ tropi. Metaphysica vulgaris. Metaphysica novella. De summâ intellectualium. De formis idealibus. De spiritu aquolibet. De speciebus hypotheticis. De esse intelligibili creaturæ. De esse in suo prolixo. De unâ communis generis assentiâ. De essentiâ accidentium. De temporis amplicatione. De physicâ naturali. De intentione physicâ. De materiâ et formâ. De materiâ cœlestium. De raritate et densitate. De motu locali. De velocitate motus localis. Dialogus de Fratribus Johannes a rure contra Fratres. De Charitate Fraternâ. Dœmonum œstus in subvertendâ religione. De Diabolo Millenario. De perverso Antichristi dogmate. Defensio contra impios. Responsiones ad Argumenta Monachi de Sulley. De unitate Christi. De unico Salutis Agno. Christus alius non expectandus. De humanitate Christi. De defectione a Christo. De fide et perfidiâ. De fide sacramentorum. De fide Evangelii. Constitutiones ecclesiæ. De censuris ecclesiæ. De sacerdotio Levitico. De sacerdotio Christi. De statuendis pastoribus ad plebem. De ordine sacerdotali. De non saginandis sacerdotibus. De ministrorum conjugio. Cogendi sacerdotes ad honestatem. De ritibus sacramentorum. De quidditate hostiæ consecratæ. De quintuplici Evangelio. De Trinitate. De excommunicatis absolvendis. Distinctiones rerem Theologicarum. De fonte errorum. De falsatoribus legis divinæ. De immodalitate animæ. Ceremoniarum Chronicon. De dilectione. Concordantiæ Doctorum. De contrarietate duorum dominorum. De lege divinâ. De necessitate futurorum. De operibus spiri-

CHAP. X.

tualibus. De operibus corporalibus. De ordinariâ Laicorum. De purgatorio piorum. Positiones variæ. Replicationes et positiones. De præscito ad beatitudinem. De quaternario Doctorum. De religiosis privatis. De studio lectionis. De servitute civili. Theologiæ placita. De virtute orandi. De compositione hominis. De homine misero. Scholia scripturarum. Glossæ scriptuarum. Glossæ vulgares. Glossæ manuales. Glossæ novella. Lectiones in Danielem.

SECTION V.

The following works, with the exception of the last, have been improperly attributed to Wycliffe.

De tribus sagittis. Speculum Peccatoris. The Confession of St. Brandoun. Ghostly and Fleshly Love. The two former of these are attributed on better evidence to the Hermit Hampole.

Commentarii in Psalterium, et Cantica Sacra. This also is evidently the production of Hampole, (Baber, 54.) The writer of a manuscript note to a copy of this work in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, states, that this commentary became popular with the disciples of Wycliffe, and that the later transcripts of it were accordingly greatly interpolated with the doctrine of the lollards. The correctness of this statement is hardly questionable, and it will sufficiently account for the circumstance of the entire work being ascribed to our reformer. There is a copy in the British Museum.

Elucidarium Bibliorum. Sometimes described as *Prologus ad intogram Bibliorum Versionem,* is the work of which the reader will find an account in the second chapter of this volume. The MS. is in the British Museum, Harl. MS. 1666. It has been twice printed. First at the press of John Gowghe, in 1536, subsequently by Robert Crowley, in 1550. The title of the first edition is, *The Dore of Holy Scriptures.*

In the second, it is thus described. *The pathway to perfect knowledge, the true copye of a prologue, wrytten about two hundred yeares paste by John Wycliffe, (as maye justly be gathered bi that, that John Bale hath wrytten of him in his Boke intitled, the summarie of the famouse writers of the Isle of Great Britaine,) the original whereof is found wrytten in an old English Bible, betwixt the Olde Testament and the Newe. Which Bible remaineth now in the Kyng, his majesties chamber.* That this work was not the production of Wycliffe, but of some zealous disciple after his death is placed beyond doubt by its contents. See Baber, pp. 52, 53, and Lewis, chap. ix. and chap. ii. of this volume.

Ecclesiæ Regimen, is a work consisting of a series of articles expressive in almost every sentence of the doctrine of Wycliffe. In the copy of these articles in the British Museum, there appears to be a reference to Gerson, the celebrated parisian divine, which if so intended, must prove that copy of the work to be of a date subsequent to the time of Wycliffe. The piece, however, is evidently a compilation from the writings of our reformer, whether completed by himself or a disciple, as it not only contains a summary of his doctrine, but much of his language.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

GEN. i. In the bigynnyng God made of nought hevene and erthe, forsothe the erthe was idil and voyde, and derknessis weren on the face of deppe; and the Spiryt of the Lord was borne on the watris. And God sayde, light be maad, and light was maad. And God saw the light that it was good, and he departide the light fro derknessis, and he clepide the light day, and the derknessis nyght; and the eventid, and morntid was maad one day. And God seyde, the firmament be maad in the myddis of watris, and departe watris fro watris; and God made the firmament, and departed the watris that weren undir the firmament, fro those watris that weren on the firmament, and it was doon so, and God clepide the firmament hevene, and the eventid and the morntid was maad the secunde day.

Gen. c. xlv. Joseph myghte not lengur absteyne him silf, while manye men stooden bifore. Wherefore he comandide, that alle men shulden go out and that noon alyen were present in the knowing of Joseph and hise britheren. And Joseph reiside the vois with weping, which egyptyans herden, and al the hows of Farao. And he seyde to hise britheren, I am Joseph, lyveth my fadir yit? The britheren myghten not answere, and weren a gast by ful mych drede; to whiche he seyde mekely, neighe ye to me, and whanne they hadden neighid nigh, he seyde, I am Joseph youre brothir whom ye seelden in to Egypt, nyle ye drede, nether seme it to be hard to you that ye seelden me into these cuntreys, for God hath sent me bifore you in to Egypt for youre heelthe, for it is

twey yeer that bungur bigan to be in the lond, yit fyve yeer suen in which men shall not mowe erthe, nether repe, and God bifore sente me, that ye be reserved in erthe and mown have metis to lyve. I was sent hidur, not by youre councel, but by Goddis wille.—MS. Bibl. Reg.

No. II.[1]

MS. in Hyp. Bodl. 163.

Conclusiones J. Wiclefi de Sacramento Altaris.

1. HOSTIA consecrata quam videmus in Altari nec est Christus nec aliqua sui pars, sed efficax ejus signum.

2. Nullus viator sufficit oculo corporali, sed fide Christum videre in hostia consecrata.

3. Olim fuit fides Ecclesie romane in professione Berengarii quod panis et vinum que remanent post benedictionem sunt hostia consecrata.

4. Eukaristia habet virtute verborum sacramentalium tam corpus quam sanguinem Christi vere et realiter ad [a] quemlibet ejus punctum.

[a] Sic MS.

5. Transsubstantiacio, ydemptificacio et impanacio quibus utuntur baptiste signorum in materia de eukaristiâ non sunt fundabiles in Scriptura.

6. Repugnat Sanctorum sentenciis asserere quod sit accidens sine subjecto in hostia veritatis.

7. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in natura sua panis aut vinum, habens virtute verborum sacramentalium verum corpus et sanguinem Christi ad quemlibet ejus punctum.

8. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in figurâ corpus Christi et sanguis, in que transubstanciatur panis aut vinum cujus remanet post consecracionem aliquitas licet quoad consideracionem fidelium sit sopita.

[1] Several of the papers in this and the preceding Appendix have been printed from Mr. Lewis's Collection, and it will be seen, that I have generally retained his emendations.

9. Quod accidens sit sine subjecto non est fundabile, sed si sic Deus adnichilatur et perit quilibet articulus fidei Christiane.

10. Quecunque persona vel secta est nimis heretica què pertinaciter defenderit quod Sacramentum Altaris est panis per se existens in natura infinitum abjectior et imperfectior pane equino.

11. Quicunque pertinaciter defendet quod dictum Sacramentum sit accidens, qualitas, quantitas aut earum aggregatio incidit in heresim supradictam.

12. Panis triticeus in quo solum licet conficere, est in natura infinitum perfectior pane fabino vel ratonis, quorum uterque in natura est perfectior accidente.

No. III.

Diffinitio facta par Cancellarium et Doctores Universitatis Oxonii, de Sacramento Altaris contra Opiniones Wycliffianas: alias Sententia Willielmi Cancellarii Oxon. contra M. J. Wyclyff residentem in Cathedra.

Spelman, vol. ii. p. 627. Ex. MS. Hyp. Bodl. 163.

WILLIELMUS de [a] Barton Cancellarius Universitatis Oxon. Omnibus dicte Universitatis filiis ad quos presens nostrum mandatum pervenerit, salutem, et mandatis nostris firmiter obedire. Ad nostrum non sine grandi displicentia pervenit auditum, quod cum [b] omnium heresium inventores, defensores, seu fautores, cum eorum [c] perniciis dogmatibus sint per sacros Canones sententia majoris Excommunicationis damnabiliter involuti, et sic a cunctis Catholicis racionabiliter evitandi; Nonnulli tamen maligni spiritus repleti concilio in insaniam mentis producti, molientes tunicam Domini [d] scilicet Sancte Ecclesie scindere unitatem, quasdam hereses olim ab Ecclesia solenniter condemnatas: Hiis diebus, proh dolor! innovant, et tam in ista Universitate ista quam extra publice dogmatizant; duo inter alia sua documenta pestifera asserentes,

a Berton.

b omnes.

c pernitiosis.

d similiter

primo, in Sacramento Altaris substantiam panis materialis et vini, quæ prius fuerunt ante consecrationem, post consecrationem realiter remanere. Secundo, quod execrabilius est auditu, in illo venerabili Sacramento non esse Corpus Christi et sanguinem essentialiter, nec substantialiter, nec etiam corporaliter, sed figurative, seu tropice, sic quod Christus non est ibi veraciter in sua propria persona corporali. Ex quibus documentis fides catholica periclitatur, devocio populi minoratur, et hec Universitas mater nostra non mediocriter diffamatur. Nos igitur advertentes quod assertiones hujusmodi per tempus se deteriores haberent si diucius in hac Universitate sic conniventibus oculis tolerentur, convocavimus plures sacræ Theologiæ Doctores et Juris Canonici Professores quos periciores credidimus, et premissis assertionibus in eorum presentia patenter expositis ac diligenter discussis, tandem finaliter est compertum, et eorum judiciis declaratum ipsas esse errores atque determinationibus Ecclesiæ repugnantes, contradictoriasque earundem esse veritates Catholicas, et ex dictis sanctorum, et determinacionibus Ecclesie manifeste sequentes; videlicet quod per verba Sacramentalia a sacerdote rite prolata panis et Vinum in Altari in verum corpus Christi et sanguinem transubstantiantur seu substantialiter convertuntur, sic quod post consecrationem non remanent in illo venerabili Sacramento, Panis materialis et Vinum que prius secundum suas substantias seu naturas; sed solum species eorundem, sub quibus speciebus verum corpus Christi et sanguis realiter continentur, non solum figurative seu tropice, sed essentialiter, substantialiter ac corporaliter, sic quod Christus est ibi veraciter in sua propria presencia corporali, Hoc credendum, hoc docendum, hoc contra omnes contradicentes viriliter defendendum. Hortamur igitur in Domino, et auctoritate nostra monemus primo, secundo et tercio, ac districtius inhibemus, pro prima monicione assignando unum diem; pro secunda alium diem; et pro tertia monicione Canonica ac peremptoria unum alium diem, ne quis de cetero cujuscunque gradus, status aut conditionis existat, premissas duas assertiones erroneas aut earum alteram, in scolis vel

ea m
e presentia.
f partus.
g judicio.
h erroneas
i secundum.
l aut.

extra scolas in hac Universitate publice teneat, doceat [m] aut defendat sub pena incarcerationis, et suspencionis ab omni actu scolastico, ac eciam sub pena excommunicacionis majoris quam in omnes et singulos in hac parte rebelles et nostris monicionibus non parentes, lapsis ipsis tribus diebus pro monicione canonica assignatis, mora, culpa et offensa precedentibus, et id fieri merito exigentibus ferimus in his scriptis, quorum omnium absoluciones, et absolvendi potestatem, preterquam in mortis articulo, nobis et successoribus nostris specialiter reservamus.

[m] seu.

Insuper ut homines quamvis non propter timorem late sententie [n] propter defectum audiencie a talibus doctrinis illicitis retrahantur, et eorum opiniones erronee sopiantur, eadem auctoritate qua prius monemus primo, secundo, [o] tertio, ac districcius inhibemus, ne quis de cetero aliquem publice docentem, tenentem, seu defendentem premissas duas asserciones erroneas aut earum alteram in scolis vel extra scolas in hac Universitate quovismodo audiat vel ausculte, sed statim sic docentem tanquam serpentem venenum pestiferum emittentem fugiat et abscedat, sub pena excommunicationis majoris, et omnes et singulos contravenientes non immerito fulminande et sub penis aliis superius annotatis.

[n] *adde* saltem.

[o] *add.* et.

Nomina [p] Doctorum qui presenti decreto specialiter affuerunt, et eidem unanimiter consenserunt sunt hec.

[p] *insere* autem.

Magister Johannes Lawndreyn sacre pagine professor et secularis.

Magister Henricus [q] Cronpe Abbas Monachus.

[q] Gromp.

Magister Johannes Chessham de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Willielmus [r] Bruscombe de eodem ordine.

[r] Brustoumbe.

Magister Johannes Schypton de ordine Augustinorum.

Magister Johannes Tyssington de ordine Minorum.

Magister Johannes Loveye de ordine Carmelitarum.

Magister Johannes [s] Wellys Monachus de Ramesey.

[s] Welles.

Magister Johannes Wolverton de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Robertus [t] Rugge S. pagine professor et secularis.

[t] Rigge.

Magister Joannes Moubray Doctor in utroque Jure.

Magister Joannes Gascoynge Doctor in Decretis.

[u] ut est dictum.

[u] Convocatis igitur prefatis Doctoribus [u] in eorum domum et plena deliberatione habita de premissis, ex omnium nostrum unanimi concilio et assensu, presens mandatum emanare decrevimus. In quorum omniun singulorum testimonium, sigillum officii [x] fecimus hiis apponi.

[x] *ins.* nostri.

No. IV.

MS. in Hyperoo Bodl. 163. fol. 67. b.

Litera quam misit Archiepiscopus [Willielmus Courtney] Cancellario Oxon. ut assisteret Fratri Petro Stokys in Publicatione ejusdem Commissionis sub hac Forma.

In Christo fili, Miramur non modicum et turbamur quod cum ille Magister Nicholaus Herforde super prædicationibus et doctrina hereticarum et erronearum [a] concionum notorie reddatur suspectus, sicut nos vobis alias retulisse meminimus, extunc vos sibi adeo [b] favorabilem exhibuistis ut excellenciorem et digniorem [c] animi sermonem in Universitate vestra vobis et Cancellario qui pro tempore fuerit deputatum, ut nostris, assignaretis eidem Nicolao absque difficultate qualibet inibi prædicandum. Vobis ergo consulimus et hortamur in visceribus Jesu Christi quod talibus nullum de cetero præsumatis impartiri favorem, ne ipsorum secta et numero unus esse videamini, et exinde contra vos officii vestri debitum nos oporteat exercere. Quia adversus hujusmodi præsumptorum audaciam Dominus noster Rex et proceres regni in processus nostri subsidium nobis et suffraganeis [d] vestris sic [d] premiserunt assistere; quod per *Dei* gratiam diucius non regnabunt. Et ut talium præsumptorum consortia et opiniones erroneas abhorrere [e] dicamini dilecto filio meo fratri Petro Stokys sacræ paginæ professori ordinis Carmelitarum in publicatione literarum nostrarum, sibi contra [f] conciones hujusmodi directarum pro defencione catholicæ fidei viriliter adhærere curetis, et literas illas in scholis theologicis Universitatis prædictæ per Bedellum illius facultatis in proxima lectura inibi facienda absque diminutione quacunque faciatis effectualiter publicari,

[a] Sic MS. pro conclusionum

[b] Sic MS.

[c] Sic MS. for. pro anni.

[d] Sic MS. pro nostris *et* promiserunt.

[e] Sic MS. pro discamini.

[f] Sic MS. pro conclusiones.

nobis illico rescribentes quid feceritis in hac parte. Scriptum in manerio nostro de Otteforde penultimo die Maii. Semper in Christo valete.

No. V.

MANY writers have given us large accounts concerning the sect and name of the lollards, yet none of them are to be commended for their fidelity, diligence, or accuracy on this head. This I can confidently assert, because I have carefully and expressly inquired into whatever relates to the lollards; and from the most authentic records concerning them, both published and unpublished, have collected copious materials from whence their true history may be compiled. Most of the german writers, as well as those of other countries, affirm that the lollards were a particular sect, who differed from the church of Rome in many religious points; and that Walter Lollard, who was burnt in this century at Cologn, was their founder. How so many learned men came to adopt this opinion is beyond my comprehension. They, indeed, refer to Jo Trithemius as the author of this opinion; yet it is certain that no such account of these people is to be found in his writings. I shall, therefore, endeavour, with all possible brevity, to throw all the light I can upon this matter, that they who are fond of ecclesiastical history may have a just notion of it.

The lollhard, or lullhard, or, as the ancient Germans write it, lollert, lullert, is compounded of the old German word lullen, lollen, lallen, and the well known termination hard, with which many of the old High Dutch words end. Lollen, or lullen, signifies to sing with a low voice. See Franc. Junii Etymologicum Anglicanum, ab Edvardo Lye, Oxon. 1743 fol. under the word lollard. The word is also used in the same sense among the Flemings, Swedes, and other nations, as appears by their respective dictionaries. Among the Germans, both the sense and pronunciation of it have undergone some

alteration; for they say, lallen, which signifies to pronounce indistinctly, or stammer. Lollhard, therefore, is a singer, or one who frequently sings. For as the word beggen, which universally signifies to request any thing fervently, is applied to devotional requests or prayers; and, in the stricter sense in which it is used by the High Dutch, denotes praying fervently to God; in the same manner the word lollen, or lullen, is transferred from a common to a sacred song, and, signifies, in its most limited sense, to sing a hymn. Lollhard, therefore, in the vulgar tongue of the ancient Germans, denotes a person who is continually praising God with a song, or singing hymns to his honor. Hoscemius, a canon of Liege, has well apprehended and expressed the force of this word in his Gesta Pontificum Iungrensium et Leodiensium, tom. iii. p. 350. s. In the year (1309) says he, certain strolling hypocrites, who were called lollards, or praisers of God, deceived some women of quality in Hainault and Brabant. Because those who praised God generally, did it in verse, therefore in the latin style of the middle age, to praise God, meant to sing to him, and such as were frequently employed in acts of adoration were called religious singers. And as prayers and hymns are regarded as a certain external sign of piety towards God, therefore those who aspired after a more than ordinary degree of piety and religion, and for that purpose were more frequently occupied in singing hymns of praise to God than others, were, in the common popular language, called Lolhards. Hereupon this word acquired the same meaning with that of the term beghard, which denoted a person remarkable for piety; for in all the old records, from the eleventh century, these two words are synonomous: so that all who are styled beghards are also called lollards, which may be proved to a demonstration from many authors, and particularly from many passages in the writings of Felix Malleolus against the beghards; so that there are precisely as many sorts of beggards as of lollards. Those whom the monks now call lay-brothers, were formerly called lollard brethren, as is well observed by Barthol. Scholinger, Ad. Joach. Vadiadem. de Collegiis

Monasteriisque Germaniæ Veter. lib. i. p. 24, in Goldasti Scriptor. Rerum Alemannicarum, tom. iii.

The brethren of the Free Spirit, of whom we have already given a large account, are by some styled beggards, by others, lollards. The followers of Gerhard Groote, or priests of the community, are frequently called lollard brethren. The good man Walter, who was burnt at Cologn, and whom so many learned men have unadvisedly represented as the founder of the sect of the lollards, is by some called a beggard, by others, a lollard, and by others, a minorite. The Franciscan Tertiares, who were remarkable for their prayers and other pious exercises, often go by the name of lollards. The cellite brethren, or Alexians, whose piety was very exemplary did no sooner appear in Flanders, about the beginning of this century, than the people gave them the title of lollards, a term much in use at that time. A particular reason, indeed, for their being distinguished by this name was, that they were public singers, who made it their business to inter the bodies of those who died of the plague, and sung a dirge over them in a mournful and indistinct tone as they carried them to the grave. Among the many testimonies that might be alleged to prove this, we shall confine ourselves to the words of Jo. Bapt. Gramage, a man eminently skilled in the history of his country in his work intitled, Antwerpia, lib. ii. cap. vi. p. 16. "The Alexians," says he, "who constantly employed themselves about funerals, had their rise at Antwerp; at which place, about the "year 1300, some honest, pious laymen formed a society. On "account of their extraordinary temperance and modesty, "they were styled matemanni," (or moderatis) "and also lollards, from their attendance on funeral obsequies. From "their cells, they were named cellite brethren." To the same purpose is the following passage in his work entitled, Lovanium, p. 18, which is inserted in the splendid folio edition of Belgic Antiquities, published at Louvain; in 1708: "the "Alexians, who were wholly engaged in taking care of funerals, now began to appear. They were laymen, who, having "wholly devoted themselves to works of mercy, were named

"lollards and matemanni, (or moderatists.) They made it their "sole business to take care of all such as were sick, or out of "their senses. These they attended both privately and pub- "licly, and buried the dead." The same learned author tells us, that he transcribed some of these particulars from an old diary, written in Flemish rhyme. Hence, we find in the annals of Holland and Utrecht, (in Ant. Matthæi Analect. Vet. Ævi, tom. i. p. 431, the following words: "Die "lollardtyes die brochten, dee dooden by een, i. e. the lollards "who collected the dead bodies;" which passage is thus paraphrased by Matthæus, "the managers of funerals, and carriers of "the dead, of whom there was a fixed company, were a set of "mean, worthless creatures, who usually spoke in a canting "mournful tone, as if bewailing the dead; and hence it came "to pass, that a street in Utrecht, in which most of these "people lived, was called the loller street." The same reason that changed the word beggard from its primitive meaning contributed also to give, in process of time, a different signification to that of lollard, even its being assumed by persons that dishonored it. For among those lollards, who made such extraordinary pretences to piety and religion, and spent the greatest part of their time in meditation, prayer, and such-like acts of piety, there were many abominable hypocrites, who entertained the most ridiculous opinions, and concealed the most enormous vices under the specious mask of this extraordinary profession. But it was chiefly after the rise of the Alexians or Cellites, that the name lollard became infamous. For the priests and monks being inveterately exasperated against these good men, propagated injurious suspicions of them; and endeavoured to persuade the people, that, innocent and beneficent as the lollards seemed to be, they were in reality the contrary, being tainted with the most pernicious sentiments of a religious kind, and secretly addicted to all sorts of vices. Thus by degrees it came to pass, that any person, who covered heresies or crimes under the appearance of piety, was called a lollard. So that it is certain this was not a name to denote any one particular sect, but was formerly common to all

persons and all sects who were supposed to be guilty of impiety towards God and the church, under an external profession of extraordinary piety.—Mosheim. iii. 355—358.

No. VI.

Confessio Magistri Johannis Wyccluff.

SEPE confessus sum et adhuc confiteor quod idem corpus Christi in numero quod fuit assuptum de Virgine, quod passum est in cruce, quod pro sancto triduo jacuit in sepulchro, quod tercia die resurrexit, quod post 40 dies ascendit in cœlum, et quod sedet perpetuo ad dextram Dei Patris; ipsum, inquam, idem corpus et eadem substantia est vere et realiter panis sacramentalis vel hostia consecrata quam fideles senciunt in manibus sacerdotis, cujus probacio est quia Christus qui mentiri non potest sic asserit. Non tamen audeo dicere quod corpus Christi sit essentialiter, substantialiter, corporaliter vel ydemptice ille panis sicut corpus Christi extensum est ille panis; Sed ipsum corpus non est extense vel dimensionaliter ille panis. Credimus enim quod triplex est modus essendi corpus Christi in hostia consecrata scilicet, virtualis, spiritualis, et sacramentalis. Virtualis quo benefacit per totum suum dominum, secundum bona nature vel gratie. Modus autem essendi spiritualis est quo corpus Christi est in Eucharistia et Sanctis per gratiam. Et tercius est modus essendi sacramentalis quo corpus Christi singulariter in hostia consecrata, et sicut secundus modus perexigit primum; ita tercius modus secundum perexigit quia impossibile est prescitum carentem fide secundum justiciam presentem conficere. Qui ergo credit sive conficiat sive non conficiat manducavit, ut dicit Beatus Augustinus super Joannem Omelia 25. Et iste modus essendi spiritualis est verior in anima. Est eciam verior et realior quam prior modus essendi, vel secundum membrum secundi modi essendi in hostia consecrata, cum sit per se causa illius modi vel efficiens vel finalis, et per se causa est magis verius Ens suo causato. Modus autem essendi quo corpus Christi

est in hostia est modus verus et realis, cum autorum numerus qui mentiri non potest dixit, hoc est corpus meum, et reliquit suis sacerdotibus virtutem similiter faciendi. Hoc autem totum ex fide scripturæ colligitur. Ideo Christus est specialiori modo in isto Sacramento quam in aliis. Cum sit simul veritas et figura, non est autem sic secundum alia sacramenta, patet iste miraculosus modus essendi sacramentalis. Cultores autem signorum nesciunt fundare quod in suo sacramento est realiter corpus Christi. Sed preter istos tres modos essendi sunt alii tres modi realiores et veriores quos corpus Christi appropriate habet in cœlo sc. modus essendi substantialiter, corporaliter et dimensionaliter. Et groose concipientes non intelligunt alium modum essendi naturalis substanciæ præter illos. Illi autem sunt valde indispositi ad concipiendum archana Eucharistie, et subtilitatem scripturæ. Ideo dico illis quod duo modi priores in substancia corporali coincidunt; non quod esse substantialiter consequitur corpus Christi secundum racionem qua corpus Christi. Modus autem essendi dimensionalis consequitur ad duos priores, sicut passio ad subjectum. Et quilibet istorum trium modorum erit realior et causa prior quam priores. Nullo alio istorum modorum trium est corpus Christi in Sacramento sed in cœlo: Quia tum feret corpus Christi septipedale in hostia. Sicut ergo corpus Christi est in illa hostia, sic est substantialiter, corporaliter ibidem, et dimensionaliter, attendendo ad modum hostie secundum naturam suam, et non attendendo ad corpus Christi, et ad naturam suam, ut dictum est superius. Et ita conceditur quod Corpus Christi est substancia corporalis in hostia consecrata. Sic isto tercio modo in ista hostia secundum racionem qua est ista hostia, sed non secundum racionem qua corpus Christi. Et ita conceditur quod corpus Christi est quantumcunque varie quantificatum ibi cum sit quelibet pars quantitativa illius hostie, et tum non quantificatur aliqua hujusmodi quantitate, et sic est varie magnum in diversis partibus illius hostie, sed non in se formaliter magnum, aliqua tali magnitudine. Sed multi mussitant super isto quod sequitur ex ista sentencia quod corpus Christi non sit in

Eukaristia aliter quam in signo, sic autem est in ymagine crucifixi. Hic dicunt fideles quod corpus Christi non est in celo vel in humanitate assumpta aliter quam in signo, est tamen ibi aliter quam ut in signo, Nam Sacramentum in quantum hujusmodi est signum, et humanitas est signum, cum Luce 2do dicitur *quod positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum et in signum cui contradicetur.* Et secunda pars conclusionis patet ex hoc quod alius est modus essendi signum corporis Christi, et alius modus essendi vere et realiter virtute verborum domini corporis Christi. Conceditur tamen quod isti duo modi inseparabiliter comitantur. Hoc tamen signum infinitum est prestancius quam signa corporis Christi in lege veteri, vel ymagines in lege nova, cum sit simul veritas et figura. Intelligo autem dicta mea in ista materia, secundum logicam scripture, nec non secundum logicam sanctorum doctorum et decreti Romane Ecclesie. Quos suppono prudenter fuisse locutos. Non enim valet scandalizare totam Romanam Ecclesiam quum dicit panem et vinum esse post consecrationem, corpus et sanguinem Jesu Christi, et non obstante errore glosomium ista fides mansit continue in Ecclesia eciam apud laicos. Cum ergo fidelis non optaret comedere corporaliter sed spiritualiter corpus Christi, patet quod omnis sciens aptavit illum modum spiritualem essendi corporis sui cum hostia que debet comedi a fideli: Alium autem modum essendi cum foret superfluus abstrahebat. Unde infideles murmurant cum illis qui abierunt retrorsum dicentes, *Durus est hic sermo*, cum corpus sit corporaliter comedendum, vel cum illis observatoribus legalium legis veteris qui non putant esse prestanciorem gradum in signo Eucharistie quam fuit in signis legis veteris, vel quam est in signis humanitus institutis. Et hii fingunt quod accidens potest fieri corpus Christi, et quod melius et planius dixisset Christus hoc accidens sine subjecto significat corpus meum. Utraque autem istarum sectarum ex ignorancia graduum in signis est infideli deterior. Teneamus ergo quod virtute verborum Christi Panis iste fit et est miraculose corpus Christi ultra possibilitatem signi ad hoc

humanitus instituti. Veruntamen ista unitas vel unio sive accepcio non attingit ad unitatem ydempticam numeralem vel unionem ypostaticam, sed creditur quod sic immediate post illam, et sic accidencia corporalia corporis Christi ut quantitatis corporales corporis Christi videntur non multiplicati comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia, et per idem nec alia accidencia respectiva que fundantur in istis quod omnia ista accidencia perexigunt esse corporale subjecti sui ubicunque fuerint. Ut si hic sic septipedalitas, color, vel substancia corporalis corporis Christi tunc hic est quod corpus Christi est septipedale coloratum et corporaliter glorificatum, et per consequens Christus habet hic existenciam corporalem, quod cum sit falsum negandum est talia accidentia secundum conditiones materiales multiplicari comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia consecrata. Partes autem quantitative corporis Christi habent esse spirituale in hostia, immo habent esse sacramentale ibidem, cum sunt quodammodo quelibet pars quantitativa istius hostie, et multo magis multiplicatur anima Christi per hostiam secundum quoddam esse spirituale quam est illud esse quod habet in corpore Christi in cœlo. Et causa hujus multiplicacionis anime Christi est quod ipsa est principalius ipso corpore persona verbi. Qualitates autem immateriales quæ subjectantur in anima Christi multiplicantur cum ipsa per hostiam, ut scientia, justicia et alie virtutes animæ Christi que non requirunt pre-existentiam corporalem Christi ubicunque fuerint. Ipse enim fuerunt cum ipso, quia cum ejus anima in inferno. Sicut ergo per totam hostiam est Christus virtuosus; sic est per illam virtus Christi. Unde Autor *de divinis officiis* quod propter esse spirituale corporis Christi in hostia, est ibi concomitancia Angelorum, quia tamen sophisticari potest ista oblacio ex defectu potestatis fidei, et verborum presbyteri ideo [a] meti religiosi adorant conditionaliter hanc hostiam et in corpore Christi quod est substancialiter et ineffabiliter quietati. Sed ydiote remurmurant querentes quomodo corpus est illę panis sanctus cum non [b] sint idem secundum substanciam vel naturam? Sed ipsos oportet addiscere fidem de incarnacione, quomodo due sub-

[a] Sic MS.

[b] Sic MS.

stancie vel nature valde differentes sunt idem suppositum et tamen non sunt eedem, quia utraque earum est Christus et tunc possunt a posse non ascendere ad cognoscendum istam miraculosam unionem servata utraque natura non ydemptifica verbo Dei. Sed oportet eos cognoscere gradus in signis, et deposcere infundabilem blasphemiam de fictis miraculis ascendentis, et credere virtutem verborem Christi, et tunc possunt cognoscere quomodo ille panis est [c] bn. miraculose, vere, realiter, spiritualiter, virtualiter, et sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed grossi non contentantur de istis modis, sed exigunt quod panis ille vel saltem per ipsum sit substantialiter et corporaliter corpus Christi. Sic enim volunt zelus blasphemorum Christum comedere. sed non possunt. Adducitur autem super hoc testimonium Hugonis de Sencto Victore libro 2° *de Sacramentis* parte 8. cap. 7. Quemadmodum species illic cernitur res vel substantia ibi esse non creditur: Sic res ibi veraciter et substantialiter presens creditur cujus species non cernitur. Exemplum ad illum Doctorem patet, quia ille subtiliter inculcat catholicam sententiam supradictam, vult enim quod species sencibiliter cernitur ibi, et quod ista species sit essencialiter panis et vinum quod eciam cernitur licet per accidens; ideo sepe vocat ipsum panem et vinum, que sunt alimenta solita et principalis substancia alimenti ut patet in dicto cap. et cap. sequenti. Ibidem autem dicit panem dicit habere rem vel substanciam que creditur non ibi cernitur, cum sit corpus Christi. Sed pro isto adverbio substancialiter notandum quodcunque sumitur simpliciter pro modo substancie sic quod idem sit corpus Christi esse ibi substantialiter, et esse ibi modo substancie. Et sic loquitur Hugo. Quandoque superaddit reduplicative racionem corporis in quantum talis substancia. Et sic proprie intelligo ego adverbia. Unde eodem cap. dicitur quod corporaliter secundum corporis et sanguinis Christi virtutem Christum sumimus in altari. Quod oportet sic intelligi quod spiritualiter sumimus carnem Christi. Et iste est verus modus corporis licet non sit modus consequens corpus in quantum corpus. Quia Johannis 6. dicit Christu *Caro non prodest quicquam.* Cum nec sentencia carnalis, nec

[c] Sic MS. *for.* bene.

manducacio corporalis corporis Domini quicquam prodest. Nam insensibiliter sumitur quantum ad formam corporis sui, ut dicit doctor cap. 9. ejusdem partis, sed visibiliter quoad substanciam sacramenti. Unde talis equivocacio facta est in adverbiis ad excellenciam Eukaristie super figuras legis veteris declarandam. Nostra autem locucio est propria, quia aliter oporteret concedere quod esse substancialiter sit esse accidentaliter; esse corporaliter, sit esse spiritualiter; esse carnaliter sit esse virtualiter; et esse dimensive sit esse multiplicative; et periret modo non distinccio. Sicut ergo conceditur quod corpus Christi cernitur vel tenetur in symbolis,
d Sic MS. vel in hostia et sentitur, quod tamen non sic [d] mos quia non secundum naturam corporis Christi vel in quantum ipsum corpus. Sic conceditur quod corpus Christi est in hostia modo accidentali substancie quia modo spirituali et sacramentali presupponente tres alios modos realiores ipsius corporis existere causative: Sic autem non fuit in figuris legis veteris, vel in figuris legis nostre humanitus institutis. Et sic possunt distingui modus prior quo est in celo, et modus posterior quo est in sacramento. Sic autem in tribus discrepamus a sectis signorum. Primo in hoc quod ponimus venerabile sacramentum altaris esse naturaliter panem et vinum, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi et sanguinem; sed secta contraria fingit ipsum esse vinum ignotum: Accidens sine substancia subjecta. Et ex ista radice erroris pullulant nimis multe varietates erroris. Nam secta nostra adorat sacramentum, non ut panis aut vini substanciam: Sed ut corpus Christi et sanguinem. Sed secta cultorum accidencium, ut credo, adorat hoc sacramentum non ut est accidens sine subjecto, sed ut est signum sacramentale corporis Christi et sanguinis. Signa autem cultus sui ostendunt quod adorant crucem et alias ymagines Ecclesie que habent minorem racionem adoracionis quam hoc venerabile sacramentum. Nam in quacunque substantia creata est deitas realius et substancialius quam corpus Christi est in hostia consecrata? Ideo
e Sic MS. nisi ipsa fuerit virtute verborum Christi corpus [e] sum. non est racio tante excellencie adorandum. Tercio secta nostra

per equivocacionis detectionem, et aliarum fallaciarum tollit argucias adversancium, ut aliqua locuntur sancti de sacramento ut panis, et aliqua dicunt de isto non ut ydemptice, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed secta adversariorum f inculpat difficultates inutiles, et fingit consequenter miracula de operacionibus accidentis. Sunt autem ex nostra sententia diffinicio summi judicis Domini nostri Jeshu Christi qui in cena noctis sue tradicionis accepit panem in manibus suis, benedixit et fregit et manducare ex eo generaliter precepit, *Hoc*, inquit, *est corpus* meum. Cum autem daretur panis quem tociens replicavit pro nomine dandi et totum residuum g ppo. sigt. illi qui mentiri non potest ipsum esse corpus suum: manifestum est ex autoritate et dictis Christi, quod panis ille fuit sacramentaliter corpus suum. Adducantur autem septem testes ad testificandum Ecclesie judicis hujus sentenciam. Primus est beatus Ignacius Apostolis contemporaneus qui ab illis et cum illis h acce a Domino sensum suum, et recitat eum Lincolniensis super Ecclesiastica ierarchia cap. 3. *Sacramentum*, inquit, *vel Eukaristia est corpus Christi.* Secundus testis Beatus Cyprianus in epistola sua de corpore Christi. *Calicem*, inquit, *'accipiens' in die passionis benedixit, dedit discipulis' suis, dicens*, Accipite et bibite ex hoc omnes, hic est sanguis testamenti qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum; Amen dico vobis, non bibam amodo ex ista creatura vitis usque in diem quo vobiscum bibam novum in regno patris mei. *Quam parte*, inquit sanctus, *invenimus calicem mixtum fuisse, quem obtulet, et vinum quem sanguinem suum dixit.* Tercius testis est Beatus Ambrosius in lib. suo *de sacramentis* et ponitur *de consecracione* dis. 2. cap. *Panis est in Altari. Quod erat panis*, inquit, *ante consecracionem jam corpus Christi post consecrationem.* Quartus testis est Beatus Augustinus in quodam sermone exponens illud Luce 34. *cognoverunt eum in fraccione panis: Non omnis panis*, inquit, *sid accipiens benedicbionem Christi fit corpus Christi.* Et ponitur in Canone ubi supra. Quintus testis est Beatus Jeromius in epistola ad Elvideam, *Nos*, inquit, *audiamus panem quem fregit Dominus, deditque discipulis suis esse*

f *f* inculcat.

g proprio signavit.

h Sic MS. pro accepit.

corpus Domini Salvatoris, ipso dicente ad eos, Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Sextus testis est Decretum
[i] Sic MS. Romane Ecclesie, que sub Nicolao 2° et 114 Epist. [i] dectavit prudentur secundum rectam logicam que debet capi a tota Ecclesia, quod panis et vinum que in altari ponuntur sunt post consecracionem non solum sacramentum, sed verum corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Jeshu Christi, ut patet in can. ubi supra. Septimus testis est usus Ecclesie que in canone misse habet, *ut hec oblacio fiat nobis corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Jhesu Christi.* Illam autem oblacionem vocat Ecclesia terrenam substanciam, sicut patet in secreto medie misse Natalis Domini. Ista autem septem testimonia sic inficiunt glossatores, qui dicunt tacite omnia talia dicta sanctorum debere intelligi per suum contrarium, et sic negari finaliter cum scriptura. Penset itaque fidelis si sanum fuerit hereticare vel in hoc scandalizare hos testes et multos similes. Penset 2°. quid tenderet ad honorem corporis Christi vel devocionem populi quod ipsum corpus dignissimum sit unum accidens sine subjecto, quod Augustinus dicit esse non posse; vel si est, est unum vel aliud abjectissimum in natura. Tunc
[k] Sic MS. pro Augustinus. inquam foret [k] Aug^{s} meus ut constat hereticus qui in epistola 14 ad Bonifacium de fide Ecclesie ita scribit. *Si,* inquit, *Sacramenta quandam similitudinem rerum earum quarum sacramenta sunt non haberent, omnino sacramenta non essent. Ex hac eciam similitudine plerumque jam ipsarum rerum nomina accipiunt. Sicut ergo secundum quendam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, et sacramentum sanguinis Christi, sanguis Christi est, ita sacramentum fidei fides est.* Ubi planum est quod loquitur de Sacramento
[l] Sic MS. [l] sc^{a}tico quod fingitur accidens sine subjecto. Sed que rogo similitudo ejus ad corpus Christi? Revera fructus illius demencie foret blasfemare in Deum, scandalizare Sanctos, et illudere Ecclesie per mendacia accidentis. Ad tantum quidem Testimonium Sanctorum per glosatores subvertitur, quod committo sensui equivoco quodcunque dictum eciam scripture non facit fidem. Postremo scribit Hyllarius ut recitatur inde *consecra* di. 2. *Corpus Christi quod sumitur de altari figura*

est dum panis et vinum extra videtur; Videas autem cum corpus et sanguis Christi in veritate interius creditur. Ecce quam plane panis et vinum sunt hoc sacramentum, ut dicit decretum *Ego Berengarius.* Unde ad delegendum equivocacionem illius materie scribitur, ibidem secundum verba Jeronimi, *De hac quidem hostia que in Christi commemoracione mirabiliter fit, edere licet.* Ubi planum est quod loquitur de esu corporali et distinguit inter has duas hostias secundum sui substancias vel naturas. Licet panis iste sit secundum racionem alia quam sacramentum ipsum corpus, ut ipse sanctus dicit in Epistola ad [m] Elbideam, ut recitatur superius. Et patet quam spissi cultores signorum sunt in materia ista heretici. Nedum quia imponunt heresim fidelibus qui elucidant istam fidem; et accusacio de heresi obligat ad penam talionis; verum quia falsificant et sic negant Dominum Jesum Christum. Nam nihil debemus secundum fidem Evangelii Christo credere, si non asseruit panem quem cepit in manibus ac fregit, esse corpus suum: sicut dicit Augustinus super [n] p. 66. *Si ego quicquam dixero, nolite ex hoc credere; sed si Christus dicit, ve qui non credit.* Hec debemus credere aliquem secundum Evangelium si non istum. Ideo ve generacioni adultere que plus credit testimonio Innocencii vel Raymundi quam sensui Evangelii capto a Testibus supradictis. Idem enim esset scandalizare illos in isto et imponere eis heresim, ex perversione sensus scripture, precipue et iterum de ore perverso Apostate accumulantis super Ecclesiam Romanum mendacia quibus fingit quod Ecclesia posterior priori contraria correxit fidem quod sacramentum istud sit accidens sine subjecto, et non verus panis et vinum, ut dicit Evangelium cum decreto. Nam teste Augustino tale accidens sine subjecto non potest sacerdos conficere. Et tamen tantum magnificant sacerdotes Baal, mendaciter indubie juxta scolam patris sui, consecracionem hujus accidentis quod reputant missas alias indignas audiri, vel dissensientes suis mendaciis inhabiles alicubi graduari; sed credo quod finaliter veritas vincet eos.

[m] Helvidium.

[n] Sic MS. *for.* Psalmum.

No. VII.

Knighton de Event. Angl. apud X. Scriptores, coll. 2649, 2650.

"We beleve as Crist and his Apostolus han taugt us, that the Sacrament of the Auter white and ronde, and lyk tyl oure brede or ost unsacrede is verray Goddus body in fourme of brede, and if it be broken in thre parties as the Kirke uses, or elles in a thousand, everylk one of these parties is the same Goddus body, and ryth so as the persone of Crist is veray God and verray man, verray Godhede, and verray manhede ryth so as holy Kirke many hundrith wynter has trowyde, the same Sacrament is verray Goddus body and verray brede: as it is forme of Goddus body and forme of brede as techith Crist and his Apostolus. And therefore Seynt Poule nemeth it never but when he callus it brede, and he be our beleve tok his wit of God in this: and the argument of heretykus agayne this sentens, * lyth to a Cristene man to assolve. [And right as it is heresie to belive that Crist is a spirit and no body:] so it is heresie for to trowe that this Sacrament is Goddus body and no brede: for it is both togedur. But the most heresie that God sufferyde come tyl his Kyrke is to trowe that this Sacrament is an accident withouten a substance, and may on no wyse be Goddus body: for Crist sayde bewitnesse of John that *this brede is my body.* And if the say that be this skylle that holy Kyrke hat bene in heresy many hundred wynter, sothe it is, specially sythen the fende was lousede that was bewitnesse of angele to John Evangeliste after a thousande wynter that Crist was stenenyde to heven. But it is to suppose that many seyntes that dyede in the mene tyme before her death were purede of this erroure. Owe howe grete diversitie is betwene us that trowes that this Sacrament is verray brede in his kynde, and between heretykus that tell us that this is an accident withouten a sujet. For before that the fende fader of lesyngus was lowside, was never this gabbyng contryvede. And howe grete diversitie is between us that trowes that this Sacrament that in his kinde is veray brede and sacramentally Goddus body, and betwene heretykes that

* easy.

trowes and telles that this Sacrament may on none wyse be Goddus body. For I dare surly say that yf this were soth Cryst and his seynts dyede heretykus, and the more partye of holye Kirke belevyth nowe heresye, and before devout men supposen that this counsayle of Freres in London, was with the herydene. For they put an heresie upon Crist and seynts in heyyne, wherefore the erth tremblide.[2] Fay land maynnus voice answeryde for God als it did in tyme of his passione, whan he was dampnyde to bodely deth. Crist and his modur that in gronde had destroyde all heresies kep his Kyrke in right belefe of this Sacrament, and move the King and his rewme to aske sharply of his Clerkus this offis that all his possessioneres on pain of lesyng all her temporaltes telle the King and his rewme with sufficient grownding what is this Sacrament; and all the Orders of Freres on payne of lesing her legians telle the King and his rewme with gode grounding what is the Sacrament: for I am certaine of the thridde part of Clergie that defendus thise doutes that is here said, that they will defende it on paine of her lyfe."

No. VIII.

Dr. Wiclif's Letter of Excuse to Pope Urban VI. Bibl Bod. MS.

I HAVE joyfully to telle alle trew men the bileve that I hold, and [a] algatis to the Pope. For I suppose, that if any faith, be rightful and geven of God, the Pope will gladly conserve it: and if my faith be error, the Pope will wisely amend it. I suppose over this, that the Gospel of Christ be part of the corps of God's lawe. For I beleve that Jesu Christ that gaf in his own persoun this Gospel is very God and very mon, and be this it passes all other lawes. I suppose over this, that the Pope be most oblishid to the keping of

[a] always.

[2] Ipse Wycliff in 4. libro Trialogi sui ter dampnati capitulo 36. prædictum concilium contra eum celebratum A. D. 1380. Londonii vocat Concilium Terræmotus. *Gascoigne Dict. Theo. MS.*

the Gospel among all men that liven here. For the Pope is highest vicar that Christ has here in erth. For [b] moreness of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly moreness, bot by this, that this vicar [c] sues more Christ by vertuous living: for thus teches the Gospel. That this is the sentence of Christ and of his Gospel I take as bileve; that Christ for time that he walked here was most poore mon of alle both in spirit and in [d] haveing; for Christ says that he had noht for to rest his hede on. And over this I take as bileve, that nó mon schulde sue the Pope, ne no saint that now is in hevene, bot in [e] alsmyche as he sued Christ: for James and John errid, and Peter and Powl sinned. Of this I take as holesome counseile, that the Pope leeve his worldly lordschip to worldly lords, as Christ gaf him, and move speedily all his Clerks to do so: for thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciplis, till the fende had blynded this world. And if I erre in this sentence I will mekely be amendid, hif by the death, hif it be skilful, for that I hope were gode to me. And if I might traveile in my own persoun, I wolde with God's will go to the Pope. Bot [Christ] has nedid me to the contrary, and taught me more obeishe to God than to mon. And I suppose of our Pope that he will not be Antichrist, and reverse Christ in this wirking to the contrary of Christ's wille. For if he summons ageyns resoun by him or any of his, and pursue this unskilful summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful entent excusid not Petir that ne Christ [g] clepid him Sathanas: so blynd entent and wicked conseil excuses not the Pope here, bot if he aske of trewe Prestis that they traveile more than they may, 'tis not excused by resoun of God that ne he is Antichrist. For our bileve techis us that our blessid God suffrys us not to be temptyd more than we may; how schuld a mon aske such service? And therefore pray we to God for our Pope Urban the [h] Sex that his old holy entent be not quenchid by his enemys. And Christ that may not lye seis that the enemyes of a mon be especially his homelye [i] meinth, and this is [k] soth of men and fendis.

[b] greatness.
[c] follows.
[d] possessions.
[e] as much.
[g] called.
[h] sixth.
[i] family.
[k] truth.

INDEX.

Albigenses, origin of the name, i. 142. Their sufferings, 144—152. But very imperfectly known to our ancient historians, 181.

Amour, St. his controversy with the mendicant orders, ii. 176—179.

Anglican Church, authority of the english monarchs in relation to it, subsequent to the conquest, i. 159—161. How impoverished by the pontiffs, 161—165. Its corrupt state at the commencement of the fourteenth century, 188—193.

Anselm, St. notice of him, i. 184, 185.

Appellant Jurisdiction, unknown in the primitive church, i. 11, 12. Its progress in connexion with the papacy, 79, 80.

Armachanus, his dispute with the mendicants, i. 251.

Arnold of Brecia, sketch of his history, i. 132—137.

Becket, his controversy with Henry II. i. 171—176.

Bernard, St. his disputes with the sectaries of his time, i. 127.

Bohemia, sketch of its early religious history, ii. 159—163.

Bradwardine, notice of him, i. 186, 187.

Bruges, character of that city in the fourteenth century, i. 322, 323. Wycliffe and the Duke of Lancaster meet there, 324.

Celibacy of the Clergy, how established, i. 37—41. Enforced by Hildebrand, 88.

Census, effect of the demand made respecting it by Urban V. i. 264—266.

Chivalry, its defects and vices, 284—287.

Christianity, doctrines peculiar to it, i. 99—101. Its favorable influence on the states of the western empire, 94—99. Defects and evil tendencies of that, prevalent during the middle ages, 101—108.

Christian dispensation, its peculiarities, i. 2, 3.

Church, ancient import of that word, i. 5.

Claude of Turin, notice of him, i. 125. His doctrines survive him, 126.

Cologne, character and doctrine of the martyrs who suffered there in the twelfth century, i. 126—128.

Commerce, its state in England, and its influence on the constitution and society, to the accession of Edward III. i. 195—203.

Councils, ecclesiastical, their origin and injurious effects, i. 12—14.

Edmund, St. notice of him, i. 185.
Edward III. his character and that of his court, i, 282—287.
English Constitution, effect of commerce upon it, i. 198—200, and of the wars with France, 281, 282.
English people, their degraded state with respect to christianity, at the commencement of the fourteenth century, i. 188—193.

Feudal system, i. 194, 195.

Geoffry Chaucer embraced many of the doctrines of Wycliffe, ii. 169—191. Character of his poetry, 171, 172.
Gerard, account of him and his followers, i. 181—183.
Gregory the Great, his character, i. 71—77.
Grossteste, notice of him, i. 169—171.

Henry II., his controversy with Becket, ii. 171—176.
Henry the founder of the Henricians, i. 131, 132.
Hierarchy, its state previous to the age of Constantine, i. 14, 15, and in the fourth century, 15, 16.

Images, the worship of them, how introduced, i. 56, 57.
Investitures, the controversy respecting them, i. 88—90.
Insurrection of the commons in 1381. A narrative of its causes and effects, 51—61. Similar convulsions in other states at this period, 61—66.

John of Gaunt, his early history, and his connexion with Wycliffe, i. 287—289. He forsakes the reformer, ii. 128. His probable motives in patronizing Wycliffe, 153—156.
Jurisdiction, ecclesiastical, its secular character, and how assumed, i. 16—23.

La Nobla Leyczon, contents of that interesting document, i. 129—131.
Lanfranc, notice of him, i. 184.
Learning, its state in England before the conquest, i. 200, 201. Its revival, 201—203. Its state during the fourteenth century, 203—211.
Longland, notice of his poetry, ii. 181, 182.

Mendicants, their rise and character, i. 49—51. Importance of Wycliffe's controversy with them, 248—251.
Monachism, its origin, causes which favored its diffusion and the evils attending it, i. 41—49.

Paganism of Greece and Rome, i. 93, 94, and of the Northern Nations, 94.
Pagan customs incorporated with the papal ritual, 51—55.
Papacy, its early advances and progress to the year 600, i. 63—71. Sketch of its history from the death of Gregory the first, to the pontificate of Hildebrand, 77—88. Its despotic tendencies, 155, 156. Its influence on the Anglo-Saxon church, 157. Its avarice, 161—165. Its encroachments variously resisted by the english monarchs, the laity, and the clergy, before the reign of Edward the third, 161—169. Limits of that resistance, 178—180. Its influence in England impaired by the residence of the popes at Avignon, 281, 282. Its policy borrowed from paganism, 55, 56.

Parliament, novel measure of that convened in 1371, i. 290—292. Proceedings of the good parliament, 329—335. Wycliffe's reply to the question proposed by the first parliament convened under Richard the second, 344—347. Success of Wycliffe's appeal to the parliament assembled in 1382, ii. 126.

Patronage, its origin, progress, and abuses, i. 7, 8. Its rights invaded by the pontiffs, 9—11.

Paulicians, their character and history, i. 111—118. Their dispersion, and connexions with the Waldenses, 118—122.

Paulinus, his primitive doctrine and zeal, i. 124.

Persecution, its inefficacy during the middle ages, i. 109, 110. Its history, ii. 111—114.

Pestilence, melancholy effects of that in 1348, i. 238—240.

Peter Lombard, character of his theology, i. 188.

Poetry, its influence on the reformation of the church, ii. 172—174.

Preaching, its history, ii. 20, 21. Wycliffe's sentiments concerning it, 10—20.

Purgatory, history of that doctrine, i. 57. Wycliffe's sentiments respecting it, ii. 321—325.

Religion necessary to political security, i. 92, 93.

Roman de la Rose, character of that poem, ii, 174—176.

Sacred Scriptures, history of attempts towards translating them into the language of this country before the age of Wycliffe, ii. 37—42. The whole bible translated by him, the novelty of that achievement, the anger of the clergy, and his mode of defending his conduct, 42—51.

Scholastic Philosophy, its good and evil influence, i. 206—211.

Statutes of provisors and premunire, i. 317.

Studies of youth in the fourteenth century, i. 226, 227.

Transubstantiation, history of that doctrine, i. 58—60. Opposed by the Waldenses, ii. 74. Not recognised by the Anglo-saxon church, 75—77. Opposed by Berengarius, and defended by Lanfranc, 73. 77. 78. Assailed by Wycliffe, 78—89. Doctrine of the reformer on the eucharist, 343—345.

Waldenses, origin of the name, i. 141. The character of the Waldenses, and Albigenses, but little known to our ancient writers, 180, 181.

Waldo, Peter; his history, his translation of the scriptures, its important effects, i. 138—141.

Wycliffe, his birth, i. 217. Enquiry respecting its place and his family connexion, 218—225. His early history, his appearance in Oxford, his removal from Queen's College to Merton, his studies at this period, and proficiency, and veneration of the sacred scriptures; 218—236. His tract on "The Last Age of the Church," 241—247. His controversy with the mendicants, its peculiarities and importance, 252—258. He obtains the living of Fillingham, and is chosen Master of Baliol, 258, 259. Accepts the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, 260. Disputes respecting it, his appeal to the pope, his firmness and integrity at this crisis, 260—264. His defence of the english parliament in abolishing the papal census, 269—274. Probably known to the english court at this period, 276, 277. His views in attempting the reformation of the church, 292—300. Issue of the dispute respecting his wardenship, 301, 302. Obtains his degree as doctor in divinity, 302. His theological doctrine at this period, 304—314. His commission to treat with the papal delegates,

321. His meeting with the duke of Lancaster, at Bruges, 324, 325. Effect of this embassy on his sentiments, 327, 328. He is promoted on his return to the prebend of Aust, and the rectory of Lutterworth, 328. He is accused of holding erroneous opinions, 337. His appearance before Courtney at St. Paul's, 337—339. His reply to the question proposed by Richard the Second's first parliament, 342—347. His doctrine as stated by the pontiff at this time, 349—352. 356—359. His adherents in Oxford, numerous, 358, 359. His appearance before the papal delegates at Lambeth, 359, 360. Substance of the paper said to have been delivered to them stating his doctrine, on the limits of the papal authority: on the power of the crown with respect to the revenues of the clergy: on the hierarchy: and on the authority of the priesthood in binding and loosing, 362—383. He is assailed by an anonymous divine, 383. His indignant reply, 384—387. His tract on the schism of the popes, and other references to that event, ii. 4—6. His sickness and recovery, 8, 9. His sentiments on preaching, 10—20. His laborious attention to that office, 12, 13. Character of his sermons, 21—23. Extracts, 23—36. His translation of the scriptures, and defence of that undertaking, 42—51. He assails the doctrine of transubstantiation, 78—81. His opinions condemned by the chancellor of the University, 81, 82. His appeal to the civil power, 83. Publishes his "Wicket," 84—89. His devotional allusions to the evils of his day, 116. His petition to the parliament, 117—126. He is forsaken by Lancaster, 128. His purposes unaltered by that event, 129. His enlightened views of the controversy respecting the eucharist, and his confidence of ultimate success, 130—132. His appearance before the convocations at Oxford, and the substance of his confessions, 132—138. His letter to the pontiff, 141—143. His disciples, numerous in the higher classes, 157—159. 163—169. Number and character of his followers, 183—196. Character of his "Poor Priests," 196—206. Notices of his writings from the period of his exclusion from Oxford, to his decease, 207—256. His sickness and death, 258, 259. For his opinions, see chap. viii. Observations on his character, see chap. ix.

ERRATA.

Vol. I. page 56, note 57, for "*vestages* of ancient *manner* in Italy," read "vestiges of ancient manners."

Vol. II. page 178, for "*Heminford*," read "*Hemingford*.

185, for "*Edward*," read "*Edmund*."

202, for "*Trialogos*," read "*Trialogus*." Also in 235.

225, note 34, for "dare be *masters*," read "dare be *martyrs*."

290, for "*stating* a simple livelihood," read "*taking* a simple," &c.

299, for "*property* liberties," read "*proper* liberties."

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY S HOLDSWORTH 13, PATERNOSTER ROW.

00035932

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016